RIGHT TO BELIEVE

By

ANOR HARRIS ROWLAND

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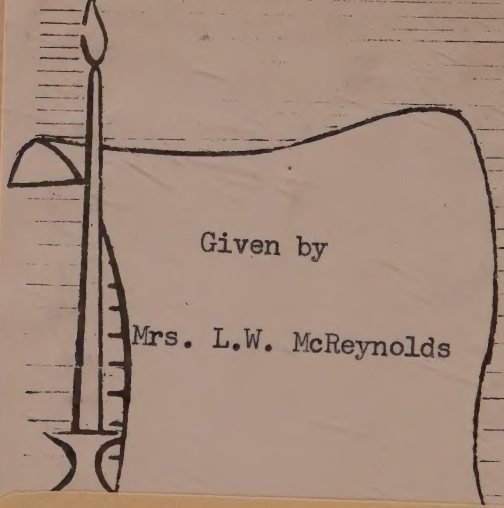

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THE RIGHT TO BELIEVE

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BY

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

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Published September 1909

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TO MY FATHER

LYMAN SIBLEY ROWLAND, D.D.

TO WHOSE CRITICISM AND APPROVAL

I WOULD SO GLADLY SUBMIT

THIS BOOK

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INTRODUCTION

In these days of many books, the appearance of a new volume seems to demand from its author a justification of his right to foist more print on an already over-burdened public. This explanation is the more necessary, if his book treats of subjects in a field which is not his own; for specialized knowledge has come to be the one requisite of all serious authorship; and in order to put some brakes on too ready pens, we demand that every man shall stick to his trade. Yet with all this, there exists a certain reverence for facts, whether their exploiter has run across them by chance or by intention. An astronomer has the right to make by-observations on the flights of birds, even though his telescope be pointed at the moon; nothing need prevent a man from observing plant heredity even though his profession be that of a cloistered monk; and if a teacher of psychology has happened upon some religious facts may he not express them, granted that they *are* facts?

My profession is one that naturally gives

rise to questions, and its members are expected to give answers on subjects and in terms that scarcely lie within the field of their special knowledge. It is also true, that among the thinking public of America, philosophical problems present themselves, as a rule, in a religious guise, and that, when any one asks of a philosophically minded person the solution of such a problem, he wants an answer in his own terms, not in a vocabulary to which he is not used, and which either confuses or chills him by its strangeness.

The facts, then, are these. I have happened to engage in discussion with some twenty persons, whose minds were more or less at sea in religious matters; and while their starting-points were different, their difficulties fell into somewhat well-defined types. The method which I suggested for answering certain of these questions was an apparent help in enough cases to justify me in thinking it could stand the test of a wider audience. To any criticism of the book (and there may be many) I can always reply: It has answered the questions of a dozen people. I claim for it nothing more.

There are four types of doubter to which

I am accustomed. The first is the ordinary student of college grade who wishes to believe in religious truth, but is troubled by the necessary readjustment of his old beliefs. The second is the professional thinker who is especially trained in philosophical thought and language, and who, if he has any prejudice, is likely to have it rather against the ordinary formulas of religion than for them. These two classes share, however, certain respect for authority, the one for the orthodox religion, the other for recognized philosophical systems; and they have a background of acquaintance with standard questions and answers. The third type is the business man, who is untrained in school thinking, but who possesses a large share of the logic of commerce, and who recognizes the social and civic importance of religious institutions. He is apt to feel an interest in religious matters, if for no other reason, because of his church-going friends, and because as a citizen he is called upon to support parish expenses. He sees that religion is a powerful motive with many people, and would like to know what it is all about. He is curious and conscientious, but he feels that the time for any emotional expres-

sion is past for him, and since sermons do not appeal to his common sense, he leaves them to his family, and only airs his doubts and opinions when he is sure that he can do so without hurting feelings which he respects but does not understand. Lastly, there is the man I class broadly as "heathen," because he frankly considers himself in that light! So far as knowledge of creeds, respect for authority, reverence for any conceivable thing, or care for his own or other souls is concerned, he can be classed under no other head. Without prejudice for or against any belief, but taking a lively interest in the discussion of all of them, he is ready to embrace brahminism or faith-healing with equal blitheness. In a certain sense he is the most impartial thinker of any, being equally disposed toward any creed or none; and he possesses a certain honesty and good nature, which represent practically the only virtues for which he has a shadow of respect.

While I am more familiar with the first two classes in point of numbers, my discussions with a few of the latter were so much more thorough (since they took nothing for granted), that I feel that as examples they

have a value in intensiveness which they lack in extent.

That there are many other classes of people who grope for religious light, and demand it in a more emotional form, is doubtless true. They would be untouched by this sort of discussion. But I can only repeat that, with a certain number of people in private conversation, the same questions and the same answers have developed naturally. Their questions all imply an initial interest in religion from whatever motive, and a demand for a rational belief, and for fearlessness in its statement, which to others might be disconcerting.

It has seemed to me that religion, to be of real use in a modern world, should be capable of experimental treatment, and of unfettered discussion, which for the sake of a more complete final belief takes for the time being nothing for granted, and holds nothing sacred. The reverential attitude which is natural and proper for certain types of believers is unnatural and artificial for a large majority of the world, and this other class demands a meeting on its own ground, and a calm reason given in its own terms, before it will listen further.

This is said to forestall the possible comment, that great truths are handled in the following pages with a briskness that is not in harmony with their significance. But it has always been my observation, that a great truth, like a great man, cannot be made mean by the cut of its clothes. The atmosphere of these discussions is the one in which my questioners found it easiest to move; I give it as they gave it to me, and hasten to assure my reader that their attitude, while always critical and often humorous, was never flippant, and was prompted always by an honest desire for the truth.

There will probably be some in my audience who will recognize in the following discussions recastings of old arguments, which would seem to demand some mention of their original voicer. The book, in fact, shows the influence of so many thinkers, past and present, that any indication of sources would be impossible. The author often does not know whether she is plagiarizing or not, so entirely have certain habits of thought become her own, and she acknowledges herself a debtor to any thinking person who has crossed her path!

Any to whom these discussions seem unnecessary must not read the book. Those to whom no questions occur can afford to leave them unanswered; but those minds haunted by an unresting criticism of the world they live in have no choice but to question.

E. H. R.

September, 1909.

THE RIGHT TO BELIEVE

I

THE NECESSITY FOR A BELIEF

THERE must always be a common starting-point for fellow travelers, no matter how far afield their several journeys may end, some mutual solid spot of ground, however airy the subsequent flight; and on this meeting-place we must agree, if we are to understand one another.

To be as thorough as possible, then, let us begin by doubting every shred of religious belief. Some of us, perhaps, do not really find ourselves in such an extremity; on the other hand, many of us do, and in order to start together we must try to strip ourselves of every creed, and face the situation of one who not only doubts, but sincerely disbelieves every religious tenet with which he is acquainted.

If we have found difficulties with religion, if we can live easily without it, why not throw it overboard at once, and live a quiet life without? This is the method we employ with other

outgrown ideas. We believed in Santa Claus, we had difficulties in making him square with the rest of experience, so we abandoned him altogether. We had primitive notions of various sciences, which we outgrew without a pang, and have not felt the slightest responsibility toward them since. Why, then, should we not take the same attitude toward religious truth? If we find a belief in God, in immortality, in Christ, in prayer, difficult and irrational, what possible compunction need we have in dropping the subject forever?

Surely this question cannot be answered by saying that we owe it to God to believe in Him, because as yet we do not believe that He exists. The commands of the Bible are without weight, since we have no belief in its authority; and that we are adjured to believe by certain devotees need have no more weight than any other unjustified demand. Why, then, do we concern ourselves at all in the matter? If there were not some vitality in these questions, they would have died a natural death long ago; and while we maintain our right *not* to be interested in the subject, the fact remains that we are interesting ourselves with it, at this very moment; and why are we doing it?

Probably the reasons why we have not dropped our belief in religion without a struggle, or the reasons why, though we are without belief, religion still possesses a certain interest for us in spite of its irrationality, are somewhat similar. One reason is that, in spite of individual differences in our training and temperament, religious questions are so interwoven with our whole social life that an absolute ignoring of them is impossible. Every Sunday we see the astonishing spectacle of crowds of people going to church, addressing prayers to an unseen Presence, and taking upon themselves the expounding of his character. Public ceremonies are opened with prayer, it is considered fitting to christen children with prayer, and we feel a poetry in this exercise for the old, as well. Moreover, since constant decisions must be made between two courses, one of which we call right, the other wrong, we are obliged to ask ourselves whether the distinction is a valid one, and whether we are not fools for our pains, if we sacrifice an advantage to an ideal which we cannot defend. Or if we call ourselves outside the pale of all this religious and moral activity, the very fact that we do so constantly drives home the fact that we are

in some important respect different from the rest of the world, and we wonder if they can explain their position as well as we explain ours. Further than all this, when we outgrow the Santa Claus superstition and childish scientific notions, we feel no regrets, because we have replaced them by something broader and more satisfying, and we can afford to smile at them in the light of a more extensive knowledge. But if we have lost our religious belief, nothing entirely takes its place. Philosophy is frankly unable to supply a substitute. Like science it simply leaves the way open for a man to accept certain views if he chooses, and does not pretend to supply the vigorous belief in unseen things that religion holds as its special trust. If this indifferent state of mind is wholly satisfying to a man in regard to the matter; if he is content to be out of it and allow these religious questions to remain unanswered, what shall we say? As a free being, he has the right to choose what he will accept and what he will ignore, but as a thinking being he must do it with his eyes open. He must not suppose that his ignoring a religious belief is a proof of its falsity, any more than the reiterations of a believer are proofs of its truth. There were three

simple and apparently obvious Laws of Thought expounded by Aristotle, the third of which is called the "Law of Excluded Middle." The substance of this axiom is "A thing must either be or not be"; and while its statement seems obvious to the point of flatness, we ignore its truth during a large part of our lives. This rule means simply that in the case of two contradictory statements, one or the other must be true. There are but two alternatives to face, with any belief — religious or otherwise: — either it is true, or it is not true; there is no middle ground.

Therefore a logical man who abandons one side of the controversy because it is not supported by facts, must not remain on the other unless that is adequately proved; but at the same time he cannot avoid being on one side or the other. The difficulty here arises, that the contradictory proposition may be as unproved as the first, and yet logically one or the other must be true, — a third possibility is excluded.

In any such situation as this, if the second proposition can be satisfactorily proved, the doubter finds rest and goes no further; but the fact of the matter is, that belief in unbelief is as difficult to support as belief in religious

truths, and the logical man, who demands a reason, is thereby tossed back and forth on the horns of the dilemma until he lands in the annihilation of utter skepticism toward both sides. If it were possible, one might leave him here in peace. But these questions as a rule only stay in the dark for a season, to return again; while if they are dulled forever, the resulting calm is as irrational and as unjustified by logic as the wildest superstition. It is, indeed, the superstition of unproved disbelief.

We will count out of our audience, then, the religious enthusiast and the unbelieving enthusiast, who demand no reasons, and will consider the case of those who are still asking for proof of either position. In my experience, both sides are usually in a similarly weak situation logically. The ordinary man is not comprehensively logical, be he religious or otherwise; most of us are subject to fallacy, and if our destiny depended on our ability to give an accurate statement of our views about it, a large majority of us would be in a sad case. But granting this human tendency to error, which side can give the most convincing argument? If neither side is convincing, what is the next thing to be done?

The obvious answer seems to be,—if neither belief nor unbelief can support itself by proof, hold your judgment in suspense, and do not act in the matter until you get more light. This is our way of treating other rival theories. Two or more hypotheses may be stated in a text-book, and the student is advised not to commit himself absolutely to either. This is quite admissible in the case of theories of geological formation, of color vision, or of social questions where one is not required to act on the matter immediately. But the peculiarity of religious beliefs is that they demand action at once, one way or the other. While you are waiting for further proof in this debate, either you are praying, or you are not; you are accepting a responsibility to a Higher Being, or you are not; you are teaching your children religious truth, or you are not. In other words, the Law of Excluded Middle seems to hold as well in action as in thought, and however long a time you may take to make up your rational conclusions, your active life waits not for an answer, but is proceeding on one hypothesis or the other. It is, then, quite obvious that however the cautious thinker may hope to hold suspended judgment in his life of reason, his

life of action in the mean time is proceeding *as if* he believed one way or the other.

Perhaps this last statement is not strictly true in life as we find it. The usual life of a man in this position is apt to be colored by both beliefs. At one moment he acts as if he believed, and is perhaps shamefaced, knowing that he cannot justify it; while again he restores the balance by actions proceeding from the opposite conviction. But this shifting of motive power is as illogical as any, and is a damper to any sort of vigorous output. The situation is like that of a child who cannot decide whether he wants to go walking with his father or with his mother, and runs back and forth from one to the other, until at last he falls to crying halfway between them. He may not really love his father better than his mother, but for the time being he must prefer one of them, if he wants to go walking! Now we, as living human beings, are obliged "to go walking" somewhere, and the question is whether it is not better to walk in a given direction with one opinion or the other, than to take our promenade between them, turning our back one moment on what we had embraced the moment previous. Granting, then, that we

want to commit ourselves to one or the other side entirely, and not halt between two opinions, which is the safer side to use as an acting hypothesis until we have proved our position? It will take most of us some time to answer the difficulties on either side; and since we must act in the mean time, which is more likely to give us satisfaction and least likely to get us into trouble? "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to battle?" A divided mind is a weariness, a hindrance to action, and at the same time it is wholly illogical. A single purpose is at least rational itself, and since we must take our chances on the result in either case, which is the safer road to travel?

I do not pretend, of course, that I have not a conviction toward one opinion or the other, but I am trying to answer this difficulty as an outsider, simply on the testimony of the different people who have raised the question with me. Certainly the most obvious conclusion I draw from them is that religious belief is more satisfactory than religious unbelief to the person concerned. My interlocutors, if not always worried, were usually at least pensive about what they had ceased to believe, and

envied the situation of one who could believe and yet keep his countenance. Some of them had no regrets for what they did not believe, but were equally apathetic about their skepticism. In fact, the phrase I have used above, of "unbelieving enthusiast," while logically correct, fits no person of my acquaintance. The nearest approach to enthusiasm in these unbelievers was a certain warmth in pointing out the weakness of the other side; but in no case was their own situation described in glowing terms. On the other hand, I have never met any one with *regrets* over his beliefs. Since the religious situation of every thinking man varies with his training and the progress of his development, each man as a rule has varied shreds of belief clinging to him, even though in the main he is an unbeliever. Apparently these shreds do not worry him, but, on the contrary, give him a certain satisfaction, so that he is not trying to shake them off as he is his doubts. If religious belief is more *satisfactory* than unbelief, it has then one important fact in its favor as a working hypothesis.

That religious faith, if acted upon, often leads to tremendous sacrifice and hardship, I do not deny. But I am not following all pos-

sible resultant actions to their end. Both belief and unbelief have had their martyrs, as any extremes may have them; but that a certian profound satisfaction and enthusiasm, even in misfortune, pervade the religious man, and are absent in the unbeliever, seems undeniably true in all history.

I have spoken of religious belief in a general way, as if it needed no definition; but I must indicate a little more fully what we shall mean by the term. I do not mean all the possible beliefs that one finds stated in orthodox creeds, as if they were of equal importance. Some standard church beliefs can apparently be shaken off with no feeling of loss to the doubter, while others seem most essential. It is these more important conceptions which give life and meaning to the whole, that I have in mind when I use the term "belief." I have arbitrarily selected what beliefs in my observation cannot be lost without a wrench, and shall not consider those which have apparently caused no especial anxiety to my questioners. I mean then by Religion, a belief in the existence of God, the authority of Christ as exponent of God's nature, the responsibility of man, the value of prayer, and the immor-

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tality of the soul. Perhaps the inspiration of the Bible, especially with regard to miracles, is a source of difficulty to all, although a life-and-death interest in this question is not so common. I think it is not a perverted optimism in even a religious person to consider a certain honest doubt a healthy sign in society. So long as a man vigorously doubts, he is alive, and in a much more hopeful state than a careless assenter or a rigid unbeliever. Doubt at least implies a leaning of the mind in two directions; and while more illogical than a thoroughgoing belief in either side, it at least is better for life-purposes than complete unbelief. No one bothers to doubt the authorship of newspaper poetry, because no one cares who wrote it; while the authorship of the Iliad, of Shakespeare's plays, and of the Fourth Gospel excites endless discussion, because we care very much who wrote them.

So it is with religious creeds. If society were willing to dismiss them to historians, and remark, "Oh yes, I dare say this is all true," it would be in a more serious state than when it finds them so important that honest criticism compels it to doubt them. In my opinion, there is no duty imposed on any man to accept

anything against which his reason rebels. The first virtue for thought is absolute honesty, and the cloaking of irrationality in virtuous garb is entirely uncalled for. Religious faith needs no crutch, and a rational man should accept it with his eyes and intellect open. He must demand proof in such cases as those in which he demands proof in the rest of his rational life; he must not demand it where he does not demand it in his other rational life.

To sum up our position as far as we have gone: granting that we have lost religious faith because of honest doubt and perhaps positive disbelief, we cannot go from one unproved position to another: we must prove our disbelief as well. In other words, we must be on the defensive and prove that there is no God, that Christ has no authority, that the soul is not immortal, and that man is not a free agent. Let there be no misunderstanding. Eventually, as rational beings, we must accept one position or the other. These religious statements are true or they are false. But in the mean time, we must doubt and criticise both sides impartially. We must hold both opinions as real possibilities, in order to discuss them. *Logically* we are not yet ready to

make up our minds, but *actively* we are as if we had decided one way or the other.

As a practical position, then, at the start, it would seem as if, since religion gives more satisfaction than the lack of it, since it lends more significance to life to conceive our existence as immortal, and since there is at least an equal chance that a prayer to an Unseen Being is heard and meets with some kind of response, belief is the safer principle to adopt. A positive exercise of this sort can be dropped if we change our minds, but is not so easily learned by a mind unused to it. It is almost always easier to forget a technique than to acquire it; and since nothing in unbelief has been lost in the mean time (that is, no exercise the opposite of prayer, no action we must hasten to perform in case we are *not* to live eternally), surely nothing has been lost, and half a chance of something has been gained.

I cannot see how a perfectly candid, logical soul could argue otherwise. The reason why we do not act on this simple basis of accepting for the time being the richer of two unproved possibilities is that we are not so calmly rational as we think. The fear of being ridiculous, a certain indolence, a timidity, a pride

in spiritual poor health, if not a sin of graver character, makes us rather, as before indicated, half-choose the possibilities on both sides, and, having exerted enough energy to think ourselves into trouble, decline to think ourselves out again. Since, as assumed at the outset, it was a rational difficulty that shook our faith, certainly this abandonment of reason is the most contradictory and vicious proceeding. If we can leave logic alone, and emotionally accept the larger and more significant life with the rest of the world, well and good. If, on the other hand, we have chosen rigid thinking as our guide, let us stick to it, whichever way it leads us, acting in the mean time on the larger chance, as we would do in any less important matter, where there was everything to gain and nothing to lose. The third course, that of accepting a thorough unbelief, emotionally and enthusiastically, is possible in theory, but you have not done it, or you would not be reading this.

II

DOES GOD EXIST?

We have agreed on our first proposition, that a thinking man must believe in something, since every statement must be true or false, and it remains for us to marshal our doubted beliefs, our faiths that have ceased to deserve the name, and investigate the grounds on which they rest.

We will begin with the most fundamental question of all religions, — does God exist or does He not? — because on its answer depends all that is to follow. If there is no God, ethical questions may still remain, but religion strictly speaking has ceased to exist, and religious observance is a meaningless ceremony. We may approach this question directly or by a more roundabout road, and in such a discussion as this, the latter is the more obvious way. That is, instead of considering first the proof of His existence, we will criticise the evidence usually advanced for His non-existence, and later can judge on which side we have more convincing data.

We must place ourselves at the outset in a state of impartial doubt, that is, we must admit the possibility that He is, or that He is not, or, in other words, doubt His non-existence as well as the opposite.

The first reason usually given for disbelief in a God is, that we must accept the evidence of the senses, and since we do not see, feel, or hear God, why should we assume that there is one? It is an unwarrantable superstition, with no experimental basis. A second reason is that the qualities that inhere in the concept of Godhead are so incomprehensible that the mind reels before them, and that anything which is so confessedly beyond being understood, becomes a meaningless string of phrases with no savor of reality. The moment God becomes a clearly explained credible being, there is no use for Him in the world. As incomprehensible He does not exist, as comprehended He is not a God; hence the concept is a contradiction, and the economy of thought demands that we shall not introduce Him into a world that is more easily explained without Him. A third reason against belief in Him is that the characteristic of goodness is always attached to God, and since evil is so universal

in the world, no good being could have created it.

It will be seen that only the first two types of objectors strike a direct blow at God's existence. These disbelievers pin their faith to scientific proof, or to logical statement, and they therefore choose to accept only that which of its nature admits of experimental or logical handling. Since the Deity cannot be expounded in this way, the question lies outside the pale of science, and what lies outside the range of science or of logic is untrue.

These classes have valid enough reasons for objection, if they carry them to their conclusion, and will agree to disbelieve anything which does not admit of scientific proof or of logical definition. If, on the other hand, they do not demand the same grounds for belief in other accepted truths, they must not do so here.

The third class denies the existence not of a God, but of a good God, because there is so much evil (and logically, I suppose, of a bad God because there is so much good); and since His character is assumed to be consistent if anything, and the world is not so, the existence of such a God and such a world is

found incompatible, and belief is dropped. If they could be shown either that the world is consistent one way or the other, or that God need not be consistent, they must abandon their position.

Do we, then, make scientific proof and the evidence of the senses a basis for belief in other matters? In many cases we undoubtedly do up to a certain point. The senses are the usual guides for our information, and we are not able to build up our most complex imaginations without sense symbols of some kind. Not only this, but we have become accustomed to give certain senses more credence than others. The eye has come to be accepted as our more reliable informant. The cavity which my tooth once filled feels large to my tongue and looks small to my eye, — therefore, which is it? Since we see more things to compare with it than we feel with our tongue, we arbitrarily decide, *small*. I hear a voice but see no speaker, therefore I decide I did not hear it, but only thought I did. Thus the different senses are continually correcting one another, and vision, since it has developed with us a wider range and more acute discrimination, casts in most cases the final vote. If we lose

our vision, we shift our faith to hearing or touch, and if we lose all our avenues of sensation-approach, what happens? Certainly I do not cease to exist for my own consciousness because you cannot see, hear, or feel me, and because I am lost to yours. My non-existence to you because of your incapacity for sensation proves nothing whatever about my existence to other consciousness or to my own. So we might say, "Because you cannot see, hear, or feel God, nothing whatever is proved as to His being or non-being." The natural reply to this is, of course, that you are not alone in this anæsthesia, if we may so call it. All the world unites in not seeing or hearing Him; and if no one has had this sensation, it is a world-experience, not an individual one, and as such we must accept it as true.

Even here, however, the point is not proved. There are many things that we accept, and yet no one has ever seen them or ever will. Grant that the current proof of a stone's existence is that we see and feel it, the reality of the law of gravitation, in which we equally believe, we neither see nor feel. You may inspect the stone ever so carefully and you find no law, nor will you find one in the earth,

toward which it falls. That is, certain existences are of their nature unapproachable by sensation, and far from disbelieving in them because of that, you make no demands that evidence of their reality shall be presented in such terms. The falling stone you see, the law governing its fall you never do, and yet you give one as hearty credence as the other, because the law of gravitation is the most orderly and satisfactory way of explaining the phenomena of falling bodies.

If an existence is of its very nature unapproachable by sensation, there is no point in demanding such a proof of its existence. Suppose, then, that it be admitted that abstract laws are beyond such experience, and the same is true of certain material substances, such as atoms or ether. Still, it might be contended that in the case of personality (which is the religious conception of God) we do demand the witness of sensation. We only believe in a person when we see him or believe him possible of being seen by some one, and a person without some tangible evidence of his existence is the same as if he were not. Here we must go very carefully. As was suggested above, the situation is perhaps different in the case

of consciousness from what it is with material objects. Granting that to be real a being must exist somehow for some consciousness, it cannot be denied that a personality can exist for its own consciousness, even if others are blind to it; and no amount of disbelief by other minds can put it out of existence for itself. Thus logically we cannot deny the possible existence of any number of invisible, intangible beings, of whom, because of the limitations of our sense-organs (which after all respond to a very small fraction of the vibrations in the material world), we are unconscious, and whom we customarily dismiss as unreal. This apparently opens the door to the wildest fancy, — to the possibility of not one God, but many, — and this real possibility is all I ask at this point.

The doubter who has put unhesitating confidence in any personality that expresses itself to him through sensations, must admit the real logical possibility that a personality might exist appealing to no sensation of his whatever, and yet exist just as really for itself. We can even go a step further. By no possibility would a scientific man believe in God any more than he does now, if there were an appeal to

every one of his senses. Suppose he saw a manifestation of some sort which called itself God, — if he alone saw it, he would call it an hallucination; if all the world saw it, it would be classified as a visual phenomenon, more or less extraordinary as it was rarely or often seen. Men have always been hearing voices, which, however they might themselves consider them, have been labeled as nervous affections by the rest of the world; and in one celebrated instance, where a voice was heard by several, the rest of the company declared it had but thundered.

In these cases I cannot see that any blame attaches to a non-believer. The lack of credence given to a sensation-stimulus of possible divine origin proceeds from the tacit admission, on the part of us all, that this is not the basis of approach to the kind of personality we conceive as God. Whatever may be His nature, which we shall try to define later, we agree more or less consciously on the idea that a Godlike personality not only does not depend on sensation as proof of His existence, but by no sensation-proof that we can think of would the scientific thinker be forced to believe in Him. I do not mean that it follows from the

foregoing that God could not make a sensation-approach of some kind, but simply that such a sensation would prove nothing whatever as to its origin.

Our first objector is in the situation of asserting, "I will not believe in God if I cannot reach Him through sensation, and I will not believe in Him if I *can* reach Him through sensation!" His existence has then ceased to be a real possibility, and the doubt is no longer an impartial one.

We must therefore make a readjustment of our point of view. There is no sense surely in demanding a sensation-proof of God's existence, if we would not believe in it if produced. If the question is to remain an open one, we must make some other demand, the fulfillment of which will be considered a sufficient ground for belief. A large amount of discussion goes on, in any department of knowledge, from the simple fact that the disputants do not know when they have finished. Since they have never distinctly formulated to themselves what must be proved to gain their point, and what counter-proofs mean their own discomfiture, they go on and on, neither side discovering whether it has gained or lost.

We must try to avoid this human failing, by continually asking, "Is this question still an open one? Are both hypotheses really alive?" If one hypothesis is not alive, that is, if we can conceive no possible system of evidence that would be accepted as proof of it, it is absolutely without point to discuss the question further. As we said at the beginning, we must doubt both hypotheses impartially, and if our position is such that we say, "By no possible evidence could you prove your hypothesis—there is no conceivable testimony I would accept," we have put ourselves out of the game. This is entirely different from saying, "Such and such evidence I would accept, but I know you can never get it." This is a fair enough remark for any one to make. But the other position is equivalent to demanding a proof for something we have put outside the range of possible evidence, and as such it is not a fit subject for argument. We should then be in the class excluded from our audience, of irrational believers in unbelief.

I am insisting rather strongly on this point, because it is where the argument with the first type of objector is likely to stop. He has demanded a type of proof which he sees he does

not want, and being prepared with no other demand whose fulfillment will convince him, one must begin over again on a more constructive basis, showing him what he ought to accept as proof, and then producing the evidence if possible.

Our second type of objector did not go so far as to demand sensation-testimony for God. He would be willing to accept God as he accepts an abstract law, if the formulation of the idea of God were clear enough to satisfy his reason. But he recognizes that logical statement can be only in known and definable terms; and since the conception of God is confessedly too great for complete understanding, it is therefore outside the range of thought. Here we must have recourse to the Law of Excluded Middle again. A thing must either be or not be; and if both its being and its non-being are concepts too far beyond the range of experience for complete demonstration and understanding, it still remains that one or the other must be true, whether we understand it or not. To illustrate this, it is only necessary to state some of the Kantian Antinomies, — that is, mutually contradictory theories, each one being as incapable of demon-

stration as the other, and each, I would add, as incapable of complete comprehension. For example, either the universe is limited in space or it is not. That is, either beyond the farthest fixed star, and as far beyond as you like, there is a limit fixed to the bounds of the universe, or there is not. I cannot comprehend it as limited, for that implies nothingness beyond the limits, and that I cannot conceive. Neither can I conceive it as extending infinitely without limits. Therefore both possibilities are inconceivable, and yet, since a thing must either be or not be, one or the other is true. The same situation holds with the question of divisibility of matter. Either it *can* be infinitely divided into smaller and smaller parts, or there comes a point where it *cannot* be divided further. Both possibilities are inconceivable, and yet one must be the final theoretical concept if we hold strictly to our law.

In fact, without going so far afield, there are plenty of mathematical facts, such as the fourth dimension, square roots of certain quantities, etc., which are valid enough truths, but cannot be clearly conceived.

All this shows that, logically, all thought

must proceed on certain unproved and inconceivable assumptions, and that the fact that they are unproved and inconceivable argues nothing whatever as to their truth or falsity. For all relative matters, that is, for all finite ideas that can be grouped under a larger concept, we demand clear definition and lucid comprehension. In any debate, for instance, the meaning of each term must be understood by both sides; each term must be clearly defined in terms of something else. This is one of the first rules of logic: "A definition cannot contain the name of the word defined." Thus, the definition of a pen as "an instrument for the purpose of writing," or some similar phrase, is valid logically; but the definition of a pen as "a *pen* for the purpose of writing," is no definition at all. We *can* define a pen accurately enough, for the very reason that it can be grouped under the larger concept of "instrument," "article of wood, metal, or india-rubber," or what not; and only because of this possibility of statement in terms of something else, is it a valid object for logical definition. But when large concepts are pushed further and further back, we come finally to a point where the idea or the object

does not admit of statement in terms of anything else. It is what we call *sui generis*, and such general concepts as Consciousness, Matter, and God belong to this class of indefinables. We see that they are indefinable solely because there is no higher class under which we may group them, and we cannot express their nature in other than their own terms; but this does not bear the slightest reference to their truth or validity. If we try to define what we mean by human consciousness, how do we succeed? Consciousness is consciousness; it is the sum of mental states; it is the realm of mind, — and here we are using the same undefined terms in every definition, and making ourselves no clearer than before. Of course the reason that this does not bewilder us, as do the similar attempts at a definition of Godhead, is that we feel we all have an intimate firsthand consciousness of what consciousness is. The very act of doubting our mental life or attempting to define it is in itself a mental state; and while the extraordinary inconceivability of our consciousness must have struck every thinking person, — the facts of memory, of imagination, the ceaseless stream of ideas that chase through our minds, con-

nected with our body and yet totally different in nature from their physical substratum, — in spite of all this, I say, we do not doubt the existence of consciousness, because we *have* it. If a logical definition of it were possible (but it is not, by the nature of the case), the real essence of mental states would be no more evident to us than it is already. All this latter argument, as with our first type of objector, proves nothing whatever of a positive nature about the evidence of God. In both cases, we have simply shown that the arguments for God's non-existence are logically untenable. They have not been the arguments, as they supposed, on which the doubters base their beliefs in other matters of life-experience. In fact, contrary to their first conviction, they believe nothing so heartily as certain facts which from their nature can never be experienced by sensation, or logically defined. They admit further that sense-experience and logical definition are by their very nature incapable of giving proof either of God's existence or of the reverse.

We are now apparently in the identical position from which we started. Nothing is proved, and we are prepared as before to be-

lieve one hypothesis as easily as the other. Only two points have been gained: we shall not look to the senses for evidence of God's existence, and we shall not look in the field of pure logic to prove a proposition confessedly outside its realm.

We say we are in our first situation, — but at first glance it seems even worse! If we have put the conception of God outside the realm of sense and logic, have we not put it out of all possible range of thought? The most complex and abstract theories of science must have an experimental basis of some kind, and if we have relegated the evidence of God's existence from both science and logical proof, what is there left but a realm of unreason where we refuse to tread?

I will agree at once that we have undoubtedly put the question of God's existence outside the range of any proof whatever. I will not say put it there, but *found* it there, as this has been no juggling with words, but the simple discovery of an eternal fact.

The word "proof" belongs to science and logic. It means, either that enough data have been gathered, with similar effects following fixed precedents, to justify the scientist in

assuming a quantitative causal law connecting them. This is inductive proof. Or it means that, granted certain logical premises, certain conclusions must follow. This is deductive proof. There are strictly none but these two kinds. Unless, then, we can formulate our subject-matter so that it falls into these modes of thinking, it is outside their range, and the word proof does not and cannot apply.

Since we have said that the idea of God was too great to be defined in other terms, or brought under logical premises, and sensation-evidence there was none, we are in this matter absolutely shut out from the close circle of scientific thought, and must proceed on a new basis.

Moreover, instead of losing anything by the change of ground, we have infinitely gained. Since science cannot prove anything for us, neither can it disprove, and we no longer fear it. We are not afraid of any possible developments of the evolutionary theory. We need not fear any disclosures in chemistry as to the spontaneous generation of matter, any researches in history that inform us that Abraham was a myth, or in geology, that the world-formation is not accurately described in Gene-

sis. We need not worry if astronomy leaves no tract for a material heaven, or if psychology refuses to speak of souls and shakes its head over immortality. As scientists we are profoundly interested in what science discloses, and look forward to years of as brilliant achievement and readjustments of theory as have gone before. But as religious thinkers we cannot use one of its discoveries to prove our beliefs, neither can it use any to disprove them. We are free. We are running on separate tracks and cannot collide, and moreover we can build up our belief with no timid fears that the next scientific monthly may shatter the structure about our ears. At first this freedom is not perhaps wholly welcome. Like a reluctant swimmer, who is for the first time set free from the trainer's hand, we are more conscious of our lack of support than of our liberty. If we cannot depend on ordinary means of conviction, what shall be our guide? But here our case is simpler than we fear. It is exactly by our ordinary means of conviction in certain instances, I believe, that we must become aware of God's existence; and these every-day means are not as universally scientific or logical as we imagine. I do not mean

by this that we are often irrational (although this is also true enough), but that there are many propositions which are as incapable of scientific proof as the one in hand; we tacitly admit it, and act toward them on other grounds altogether. These unprovable propositions are, moreover, the most important in our whole experience.

Take, for example, the very simple proposition that our friends exist, that other personalities are real, and live a mental life similar in kind to our own. Can this possibly be proved? We see, hear, and feel them, it is true, but the senses are very illusory after all, and there is no possible proof that they report an outward stimulus, rather than that they function because of a stimulus in our own brains. When you talk with a friend, psychologically speaking, your own speech answers your own sound and sight sensations of him; yours are the motor impulses, and yours are the resulting sensations; so that you could just as literally say you are holding a conversation with yourself. A certain brand of philosophy called Solipsism acknowledges itself driven to this point of view, and says we are all of us in a lonely world of our own, peopled with our own

sensations, which may be nothing but hallucinations, in the sense that there is no possible way of proving that they arise from any stimulus outside of ourselves. We call a man insane when he addresses presences whom the rest of us cannot see; but so far as any proof is concerned, we may be all of us in the same situation, with the simple difference that most of us seem to agree on certain hallucinations. I cannot know, then, that any but my own consciousness exists; but, nevertheless, I believe firmly that others do. Apparently my only reason for this is that I prefer to do so! Since I cannot prove either one or the other, I choose the possibility that gives a richer, more significant life. I do not want to be the only creature in the universe, — I can remember the horror of this possibility as it came over me sometimes in childhood; and though one might say, so long as these apparent existences are amusing and satisfactory in themselves, why mind whether they are separate personalities or tricks of your own fancy? still, we feel a wide difference, and demand that their existence shall be a real one, and separate from ours. If you do not feel this difference, if you do not feel any shock to your life in thinking that your friends are simply

clusters of your own self-stimulated sensations, you are welcome to hold with the solipsists the other view. You have as good a right, so far as proof is concerned, and not a whit better, to believe your way as mine. As for me, I prefer the other road. Most of the world prefers the other road, too, and what is more, it has never occurred to them that there was any choice. They have felt that their friends' separate existence was as assured a fact as their own personality, and that nothing could be a truth less in need of proof. In one sense they are right. Their own existence and that of others are in similar case; but instead of both being proved, both are alike unprovable!

If I turn my gaze inward to my own mental life, to discover just what I mean by "myself" at all, I shall find a tide of thoughts and sensations flowing after one another in a ceaseless stream. At present, there is the fixed attention on what I am writing, the sound of rain, the feeling of warmth, the odor of varnish, and many other concomitant sensations; but where in the mean time am I? These thoughts and sensations chase themselves along, sometimes under control of attention and sometimes not; and even if I call my *attention* the real

"I," it apparently bears no special relation to what I was attending to yesterday. It seems in any case to go *on* in a certain sense of itself — now shifting, now refusing to grasp anything, and now spurting off again. In vain do I try to separate *myself* from this torrent of ideas. If I call the whole conglomerate of my conscious states *me*, then I am never the same person two minutes in succession; if I call my memories *me*, then I am losing parts of myself every instant; my attention is not myself, for it will not be controlled; and certainly my desire to control it cannot be the real I, as that implies that I am possessed by a mental factor stronger than myself, and that I do not myself know what I am attending to, but only that I want to attend. I do not know what or where the real I is situated in me, or in fact if there is one part of my consciousness more myself than another.

Why, then, do I believe that there is an I which stands for a more fixed soul in myself than I am able at any time to designate? Is anything in fact more impossible to prove than this? Are we not driven with the materialists to say, "There is no Self. There is simply a tide of ideas aroused by fixed associational

and sensational laws, which flow on as restlessly and uncontrollably as a mountain brook. You do not govern your ideas, or exist as a Soul apart from them, and your being as a real ego is pure fiction." We are not driven to this position, because the materialist is in like evil case with us. He cannot prove that an ego does not exist, that certain phases of consciousness are not more significant and rightfully called Soul than others, and we cannot prove the reverse. What, then, are we to do? We must choose the alternative that suits better with the rest of our thinking. He may keep his point of view, if he is so enamored of his habit of classifying organisms in the lower world that, for the sake of consistency, he would prefer to class himself with them and sacrifice the possibility of having a soul. That is, he would rather run the chance in that direction in the mean time, and keep his world-classifications neat and simple. We, on the other hand, would rather take our chances the other way, and, at the expense of a uniform classification, say that perhaps man is an exception to the lower organisms, and that in spite of the inconsequent stream of ideas which make up the only ego he can discover, since he has gone

beyond the animals in *thinking* he has a self, he may have gone beyond them and *have* one (always providing *they* are without souls, which we can also never prove).

Indeed, our doubter will have no more difficult task than the one of proving that he has or is a personality in any more real sense than is any of the lower animals; and, on the other hand, the materialists cannot disprove the widespread conviction that man's higher activities of mind are expressions of a self that exists parallel with but apart from his animal nature. The two alternatives are of their nature outside the region of proof. The most naïve believer in his soul would hardly assign it a definite position in space, either inside or outside of his body; and if he refuses to place it, how can it be located, either to be triumphantly exploited by himself, or hunted for and found absent by his opponent?

The situation is this. We find a difference in quality between our ideas and certain thoughts and actions that we call more significant, more profound, more far-reaching than others; and we say, "I will call these my soul." The materialist observes these same differences, and says, "I will not call these or any other

ideas my soul." Both of us are arbitrary, and doing equally what we choose. Whether we choose one way or the other depends largely on our temperament, that is, on whether the notion of being real personalities is very dear to us or not. We may have the desire to simplify the world at any cost, and make our point of view toward man's mentality coincide with that for other organisms. If we are of this mind, and the desire for personality is not a strong demand, we are cheerful materialists. If, on the other hand, our temperament clashes with our habits of scientific classification, we are melancholy materialists, or timid spiritualists, as the case may be. The rational course is to choose the richer alternative with our eyes open, and take the view which gives the widest possibility with the least sacrifice. In giving up materialism we sacrifice only a simplicity of outlook (which is indeed restful for the mind at times); but because so much simpler than the phenomena with which it deals, it is perhaps somewhat suspicious. By adopting the other view we gain a real dignity in human achievement, a meaning to right and wrong, and an incentive to duty, and we sacrifice nothing, but only complicate our scientific theory.

Why, then, should we not be as free and happy as possible? We have at least half a chance of being right. The vigor of our acceptance of either theory will be proportionate, not to any force of logical conviction, of which there can be none, but to the *force of our desire for the possibility we have chosen.* If we *must* have one alternative or the other to fit in with our other ideals, our acceptance will be a passionate one; if we are indifferent to the outcome, our adherence will be lukewarm and will depend largely on the atmosphere we are in at any given discussion of the matter.

It is plain now where we are being led by our argument. Our acceptance of God's existence depends, as does the belief in the real personalities of others and of ourself, on our desire to so believe where proof is impossible. If it were only a case of debate, we could call it "adoption, for the sake of argument, of an unproved premise." That is, while the argument was in progress, we would agree to act as if the premise were true. But there is more than an argument in question here. On our decision depends the course of our whole life; so, in the phraseology of Kant, our Practical

Reason must function in a region where Pure Reason ceases to have a place, or in the language of religion we must live by faith.

In *any* case we must live by faith — there is no avoiding it. We live either by a faith that God does exist, or by an equally unproved faith that He does not; but live by one faith or the other, we must.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and the crux of the whole situation is, "What do we hope for?" We can hope for the existence of a God, and thereby act as members of a universe created by Him, or we can hope for a world without Him, and live as if not responsible to Him. It is because of these two alternatives, I believe, that Paul in his famous chapter on love — ardent advocate of faith as he was — puts love above it, and above hope, as the primal necessity of life. Unless we have a real and vigorous longing for a God, a love for the idea of His existence, we shall not hope for Him, and unless we hope for Him there is no reason why we should believe in Him. We should otherwise naturally hope for an easy Godless world that makes no demands on us, and as naturally believe in one.

Then the important question for every doubter to ask himself is, "Do I really want a God?" If he honestly wants one, he may proceed with us to expound the character of the kind of God he wants, and to ask what kind of evidence of his existence he wants—since he does *not* want the evidence he demanded at first. If he honestly does not want a God, he need go with us no further, as he is not of our audience.

There is a curious tendency in one conscientious type of disbeliever to feel, that in this situation, where the choice lies between two faiths, it is more honest, more praiseworthy, to choose the thing feared, than to choose the thing hoped for. The doubter hopes for a God, but fears the other possibility, and considers it a taunt if accused of believing in a God simply because he wants to. What better reason could there be? Surely nothing could be more uncalled for than to believe the opposite unproved proposition, because he did not want to! I hope I have indicated clearly enough that no scientific discovery could possibly force him to choose the undesirable faith, and that if he thinks in so doing he is more scientific than in following his inclinations,

he is mistaken. He is like a man so firmly determined to stand straight that he falls over backward.

Is there then no possible factor outside of our hope that can indicate the road we are to travel? Do the balances hang absolutely even between belief in God and belief in His nonexistence, with nothing but the added weight of desire on one side?

Evidence of certain kinds we can find in both directions, but it must be judged as we judge evidence in other questions of the same character. We must take into consideration the reliability of the witnesses, and consider whether the intrinsic worth of few witnesses is of greater or less value than numbers of lesser ones. That is, we must decide whether quantitative or qualitative evidence is what we are after.

In psychology there are no values put on different mental states. Psychology, like any science, must look upon its facts with an impartial eye, and a sensation of a sweet taste or the resolve to die for one's country must be analyzed with equal scrutiny. Although one is more complicated than the other, they are both mere phenomena to be observed with

equal interest and attention. From this point of view, the prevalent idea that each human mind is a responsible being, and not a mere reflex mechanism like the lower animals, is only another idea along with the rest, to be noticed with interest as a mental characteristic of man, but it carries scientifically no weight whatever. That is, as a psychologist, a man refuses to be interested in the ultimate *truth* of this conviction of moral responsibility, but interests himself in it simply *as a conviction*, along with many others.

So the botanist, as a botanist, is not concerned with whether a rose is more beautiful than a weed. As an artist, he may have his convictions about it, but for the time being, all floral growth is his field, beautiful or ugly, and he refuses to enter into a discussion as to the relative beauty of his specimens. It does not interest him.

But this difference between mental states does interest us. This, for the time, is just our field, and we choose to call some ideas more significant than others, and some men more valuable witnesses than others, because they share more largely in these ideas.

If we try to define what we call *ourself*, in

each case we shall doubtless specify certain factors in our mental make-up which we consider more significant. We perform more habitual automatic acts than we make great decisions, the proportion is in point of quantity overwhelmingly in their favor, and yet we feel ourselves as personalities in the latter situations, however few they may be, much more than in the former. Nathan Hale, for instance, had lived twenty years or so of eating and drinking, walking, breathing, and conversation. He died once for his country, and yet that one experience, that one choice, seems to us all, and undoubtedly seemed to him, more like himself speaking, like his real ego experiencing itself, than did the thousand and one lesser matters of his life.

Now it is undeniably true that, just as there is a widespread conviction that the human race has a life of real moral responsibility, that is, is a race of personalities and not mechanisms, so there is and has been for many centuries a conviction that there is a God. Moreover, it is true that the periods in which men have become most certain of their own personalities as moral and responsible beings, in which they have viewed their fellow men

most as persons and not as things — these have been the times when God's existence has seemed most probable. I use the terms man as a *personality* and man as a *moral being* interchangeably, because the two imply each other. If I am not a person, I am not responsible for what I do; if I am a person, I can be called to account for my actions. It is the moral world which drives home the question whether we are persons or not. When we are at work, taking physical exercise, or engaged in æsthetic enjoyment, the question of personality does not arise, and if no moral questions had crossed our path, it might never have arisen. But when confronted with a duty, the whole course of activity depends on the question, "Am I a responsible being or am I not?" and then we are driven back to ask ourself (if we have a self) the question.

In point of numbers, then, our innumerable actions of a reflex and mechanical order seem to ally us with the lower orders of beings, and make us non-personal, natural automatons. In point of significance, however, our moments of choice between important alternatives, our moments of self-sacrifice, or of creative thought, seem, in spite of their scarcity, to indicate the

existence of a real self, which, dormant though it may often be, occasionally rouses itself to action, and we choose to call those actions more truly ours than the more frequent and trivial ones. We judge our friends' personalities on the same basis, and consider certain traits more important, more their real self, than others.

Now why do we not apply the same principles naturally and without hesitation to the belief in God's existence? The world has always had the idea of a God, and believed in Him with more or less intensity. We cannot prove that such a universal conviction points to an external existence, any more than that our sensations do the same. But if we can make any distinction between the value of our different mental states, the moments when we feel most convinced of God's existence seem always of a higher order than those when we deny Him; and if we *want Him sufficiently*, it will no more occur to us to refuse to communicate with Him on an unproved probability, than to cut off intercourse with human beings because it is unproved that they exist.

The most ardent solipsist states his views to the audience whose existence he calls in ques-

tion, and if the doubter in a similar manner kept up a continual communication with a God whose existence he half believed, the practical situation would be the normal, natural one. The philosopher may ask with good reason, "Do these sense-stimulations indicate an external reality, or am I alone in my world of self-stimulated ideas?" But in the mean time, until he settles the matter, or indeed no matter how he settles it, he does talk to his friends, he acts as a good parent and citizen, and his friends look upon his doubts with a cheerful indifference. They do not care what he thinks, so long as he acts as if he thought they and he were human beings in the same world.

Let it not be understood that we are putting the slightest undervaluation on the necessity of rigidly scientific thought. We simply insist that where logic and science cannot touch the problem, we can only call the man sane who acts on the richer possibility.

If our solipsist acted on his fears instead of his hopes, if he ignored his fellow beings because he was not convinced that they existed outside of his imagination, we should call him eccentric, not to say mad. Or if a scientist doubted his own personality, and, giving up

what he considered a meaningless struggle toward certain ends, relapsed to a natural animal life, it would be necessary to shut him up. His neighbor would have the right to say, "Doubt what you like, but you must act as if you were a person and as if I were."

Now our doubters are in the situation of men who, having a defensible doubt, act on the *lesser* possibility, when it is a question of God's existence, while they very rationally act on the *larger* chance toward themselves and their friends. On the arising of doubt (and doubt is a healthy period of mental development) they cut off communication with God, if they ever had any, and the longer they are out of connection the more unreal He becomes. They commit themselves without reserve to the other point of view, forgetting that it is equally unfounded.

Suppose I follow a similar method with my friends. I begin by refusing to speak; I pass them without recognition. Every argument that might point to their reality I label as unsound, because it is prompted mainly by my hope and desire to escape from loneliness. What would be the result of this? Would it take many weeks for the conviction to deepen

that they were actually unreal, for their voices to come like meaningless dreams which I would never answer? They in turn would leave me more or less sadly alone, and not trouble the solitude with which I had chosen to surround myself. What I saw of them would pass like a panorama before my eye, hardly distinguished from my imagination, which would have been growing more and more vivid, thrown back, as it were, upon itself. This would be a kind of anti-social mania, thoroughly unhealthy and untenable, and yet just as well founded on *logic* as the normal human attitude, and the exact situation in which the doubter of God's reality finds himself.

The best men throughout the ages have been convinced that there was a God, or have been profoundly unhappy because they were not so convinced. The best moments of our life are when we consider His existence the most probable, and we have the witness of the high moments of others as well as of ourselves. We have the testimony of many men, on the other hand, that they have had no such God-experience, and we have had our own moments of certainty that God is an impossible conception. In numbers it may be that the latter

moments have been most frequent; in quality, which are of the higher order? In quality, taking the broadest view possible, which has been the higher type of man? There have been many noble men who disbelieved in God, but they seldom recommended their position or sought to make converts. Their own attitude to their convictions is a sufficient criticism. Further, on general principles a positive witness is worth more than a negative. If a sufficient number of healthy normal men assert, "I have seen," "I have felt," their evidence is worth more than that of the same number of normal, but withal dissatisfied men who say, "I have not felt," "I do not know."

If one says, "I am convinced that God exists; I speak with Him daily; certain states of mind seem like responses from another personality, and not like my own untouched consciousness," who can contradict him, provided his normality in other directions gives him a right to be an accredited witness to anything? If another man says, "I do not have any belief in God's existence, I never speak with Him, or He to me," it is a confession that he has put himself out of the range of a God-influence as much as possible. He could not be ex-

pected to know it if there *were* a God, any more than he would have an acquaintance with any one whose existence he did his best to ignore.

Are we, then, to open the door wide to any beliefs that the world wants? Are superstitions and fancies, ghosts and goblins, to be admitted to supply chance demands, since no one can touch them with proofs? If a child has convinced herself by constant conversation with her doll that it has a soul, is she justified in her standpoint?

We must of course use common sense, but the danger is not half so great of our being foolish, as of our being timid. Why not say unhesitatingly, "Of any two unprovable alternatives in regard to the existence or nature of a possible fact, that alternative is most rationally believed which satisfies the highest demand of the highest type of normal human beings; and, being accepted, only that life is rational which lives absolutely as if that alternative were true"? We need not be afraid of the demands of the human race. As a whole they do not want to believe in hobgoblins, and never will. There have been higher orders of mind in every generation, who demanded,

and taught others to demand, the same type of God we want to-day. We need not fear that we shall be forced by numbers to an irrational contradictory belief. There have always been seven thousand who have preferred not to bow the knee to Baal, and there is a certain amount of conceit in the scientific mind which is afraid to commit itself to any belief that exemplifies a world-hope. Man as a whole is to be trusted. As a trained mind, he goes as far as science will take him; then he chafes at the limits of a scientific habit of thought that confesses itself unable to decide ultimate alternatives. One or the other ultimate is true. Can he not trust his hopes? What better reason has he to trust his fears? If a man is just, can he not be trusted to live by his larger faith, and not by a foolish or fragmentary one? If the body of just men as a whole has united in one great hope, that of itself puts it beyond the range of the foolish or the irrational. The world as a whole knows what it wants.

III

THE NATURE OF GOD AND OF MAN

So far we have been discussing the question of God's existence, without once asking the very natural questions, "What do we mean by God? What means have we of knowing what kind of a personality He is, granting that He exists at all?"

At least we have got started on our road, if we remember the conclusion of the last discussion, namely, that we have a right — other things being equal — to believe what we hope. We must begin, then, by carefully deciding what we hope, — that idea must be very clear, before we can go further, — and then we will decide whether other things *are* equal. Do we have at least enough of possible evidence on our side to justify our indulging in a hearty and satisfying belief in what we wish should be true?

In a certain sense all of us do know what we mean by God. We know well enough what we have meant by the word, to make the dis-

cussion possible up to this point without any further definition. But now we must become more explicit. Our third type of objector, the man who desired a good God, but was unable to believe in Him because of a bad world, has received but little attention so far, because his doubts were founded more on God's nature than on His existence. Was he right? Are we forced to believe in a bad God if any, or is that a contradiction? And what shall be our basis of decision: the outside world, or our own minds; the good in the world, or its evil? Is there any conception large enough to include them all?

We will begin, however, in the simplest possible way. Whether we can have it or not, whether the evidence is for or against, we will ask, "What do we want?" That seemed a reliable guide in the previous discussion, and perhaps it will be so again. The attributes that the world has apparently wanted to ascribe to its God have been power, grandeur, and an interest in man and his affairs, which implies a consciousness of a somewhat similar nature to man's, although of a higher order. This higher order consists in a wider span of knowledge than is given to the human mind, and a

supreme capacity for bringing about its own wide-reaching plans. I suppose all religions have agreed on so much in the nature of God, whether they called Him an evil spirit or a good one, whether they considered that His interest in man consisted merely of vengeance on His actions, or of sympathy with His concerns. But if we are to make any distinctions between our witnesses, certainly the higher orders of men and of religions have given further attributes to God's nature. He was not only a majestic and powerful person, but His interest in man was of a noble character. It consisted not only of an abstract observation of the creatures He had made, but of a devotion to them as much greater than human love as God was greater than man in other respects. They have given no spatial character to God's person. One cannot say that He is here or there, that He has a body like ours, or indeed has any material dimensions whatever. But just as we have accepted the mystery of our own personality, and, while vaguely calling it connected somehow with our body, can find no resting-place for a soul from our heads to our feet, so they have accepted the difficult concept of a spirit without a body, as being

at least no harder to conceive than a spirit *with* a body, and they have called God such a person. This conception of God has always aroused certain criticisms. In the old Greek philosophy, Xenophanes remarked, "So would an ox conceive of God as a greater ox, and a lion conceive of him as a greater lion"; and such critics call this idea of God anthropomorphic, that is, just an inflation of man's character to as large a size as possible, and then a naming of the result, God.

It never pays, however, to be fearful. If this is actually the best thing we can do, if only by personifying the noblest characteristics that we know anything about (namely, the most highly developed mental, moral, and spiritual life of man), can we get any clear idea of a Deity, then we must not be afraid of being called anthropomorphic, or of being labeled in any other possible fashion.

Suppose we try to do anything else. If we say, "God is too great to be like man in any respect. Personality means limitation, which He cannot have; He cannot have what we call knowledge, for that is made up of ideas and sensations dependent on brain states, which He does not possess; He cannot have emo-

tions, for they are bodily affairs as well; He cannot bring certain effects about, for cause and effect are separated by time, but God lives in a timeless universe where these have no meaning." In our anxiety to do the concept of God full justice, therefore, we formulate a series of attributes more and more abstract and shadowy, until it is equivalent to saying, " God's nature must be such that man cannot really form the remotest conception of what He is like"; and we fall into a pitfall much more dangerous than anthropomorphism, for it seems to remove God absolutely out of reach.

That there is a certain justification for such a process of skeptical criticism, we must admit. Certainly in our experience of men, sensations, emotions, reasoning, and all the rest of our mental or spiritual life are apparently always in connection with brain states, and personality gains its significant quality always by certain limitations. I mean by this, that you are you because you are certain things, and are not certain others. You have a sense of humor, you are musical, you do not enjoy dancing, you do not like chemistry, you have blue eyes, you are not six feet tall, you are an

American, you are not a Swede. Thus the sum total of the things you are not, do not, and have not, as well as what you are, do, and have, makes up what we call you, and is your personality for the rest of society. Supposing now that you had no limitations, that you were all things, knew all things, were beyond all limits of bodily shape, or of nervous manifestations, in sensation, emotion, will, — would there then be any personality whatever? Moreover, since our whole mental life depends so absolutely on brain and nervous states, how can any consciousness in any way akin to our own be conceivable without a kindred body? As to the latter consideration, which we see is the same as the question, "Can we ourselves be immortal?" the state of the case is this: it is true that mental life and bodily existence appear always together in our experience, but it is also true that the link between the mind and the body is exactly as much of a mystery as the possibility of a mind's existence without a body.

I hope it will not seem as if we were systematically trying to befuddle ourselves, and make puzzles and problems out of what had before seemed simple matters enough. Our

only insistence is upon an impartiality in mysteries. If we can take the possibility of God's consciousness *without* a body as simply and naturally as we accept our own *with* one, well and good. No further discussion is necessary. But if we begin to call one inconceivable and the other easily understood, we are one-sided in our view. From one point of view, both are commonplace, and from another both are profoundly beyond comprehension. It is a commonplace that when I look at an English violet I get a purple light-sensation and a delicately fragrant odor. No one would question it, and on the other hand no one can explain it. Let no respectful layman think that a psychologist *can* explain it, for he is absolutely unable so to do. We can trace the light-waves into the eye, we can imagine the resulting chemical disturbance in the retinal coat at the back of the eye, we can fancy an observer with the most refined instruments following the nervous current along the optic nerve, until it makes connection with cells in the visual tract of the brain, and measuring the nervous discharge there and in the smell-region of the brain, where cells have been excited at the same time. All this your psychologist can

conceivably watch; but could he see the purple sensation you have been experiencing, could he smell the same fragrant odor that you smell as the cells in your brain become active? He most certainly could not. The moment consciousness of sensations is aroused in you, you have them and you alone. You do not have the experience as nerve-currents, or as discharge of cells in your brain. Your experience is purpleness and fragrance, which, hunt as he may in your brain, no observer from the outside can discover; and what possible connection there is between cell-discharge in the back of your brain and color-experience, cell-discharge at the side of your brain and odors, who of us can say? If we approached this phenomenon from the outside, we should doubtless say, "Impossible, inconceivable! There can be no connection between sensation, emotion, reasoning, and a pound or so of gray tissue which decomposes and rebuilds again like muscles or even vegetables. It is quite out of the question that the peculiar existences we call ideas should be linked with such a disagreeable mass of gray matter." We seem forced to admit, nevertheless, that there is such a connection, although, if one

really faces the issue and understands the problem, this seems as incomprehensible as is a consciousness freed from connection with a brain which apparently hinders it full as much as it helps it.

But some one will naturally object to this: "Don't give us any more mysteries than we are obliged to have. We grant that an embodied spirit is as difficult to explain as a disembodied one, but we are forced to accept the former. The tyranny of experience demands that we stretch our intelligence to include the first; but since we are not obliged to include the latter in our science, let us be thankful that we have one problem less to wrestle with."

This is, I think, the usual attitude of the unbelieving but thoughtful scientific man. He has faced both problems squarely enough to see that they are equally difficult; but a certain economy of attention leads him to fasten on the questions that he feels must be answered for a thorough scientific explanation of the world, and he leaves the others as not having enough forced prominence in experience to demand attention if he does not choose to give it. He cannot escape having mental life with certain features prominent in it, and he can-

not fail to notice that he has a body. Therefore, the connection between the two is an obvious question, and demands attention. He also cannot fail to notice that a large fraction of the world has a belief in a God, but he does not observe that he has any such belief himself. Perhaps he remembers that at one time he had certain unusual feelings that might have arisen from contact with a Divinity if there were one, but he does not have them now, neither does he want them. He finds it simpler, in a world with so many questions waiting for solution, to sweep them all carefully up, before allowing any more to blow in; and since what experience he may have had of a God does not interest him, he shuts the doors to any possible recurrence of it. In other words, he does not hope for a God, therefore he does not try to put himself in a position for contact with Him. Since he has no contact with Him, naturally God plays no part in his experience, and naturally again, since this is the case, the problem of His existence is more easily set aside as inconceivable, than is the problem of his own mind and body, which is a part of his experience, and for which, moreover, he has a certain fondness.

If previously a God-experience had become as much a part of his life as red color-sensations, or if the habit of speech with Him were as ingrained as speech with his other friends, the problem of disembodied consciousness would, it is true, not be simpler, but at least it would demand an acceptance as a tyrannous fact of experience, however inconceivable it might be. The religious men of all times have been in just this position. They have not always been unscientific men; indeed, they have accepted the facts of their religious life as demanding the belief in a God, just as a scientific man accepts certain phenomena when he is obliged to, however difficult they are to comprehend. The religious man says, "I have certain sensations and emotions when physically stimulated, so evidently my mind and my body have connection. I don't know what that connection is. I have also a consciousness at times of God's presence. I have an affection for Him. I feel that certain things are possible only if He exists. I am never conscious of Him as a body. I cannot believe that He has one, or how could I come in contact with Him as I know I do? Therefore I believe that God exists without a body, although I don't know

how." The unbeliever starts with the same reasoning as the religious man, but continues in another fashion. "I do not understand the connection between mind and body, it is true, but I am forced to believe that there is one; I am not forced by any fact in my experience to believe there is a God, since I do not feel Him; and because minds and bodies have always come together in my experience, I shall assume that they always do, until I have reason to think something else. That minds might exist without bodies, as do bodies without minds, is theoretically possible, but practically no data force me to admit the probability."

And so we might conceive an interested mind without a body joining the controversy and saying, with a wag of his head, "It is difficult to conceive how I am existing with no material limits, but it is evident that I do, so I must accept the facts. I am informed that certain minds consider themselves attached to a mass of gray substance in a bony and fleshy structure. They say that, whenever the gray substance is excited, they are; and paradoxically enough, if it is too much excited, they sometimes cease to exist altogether for certain periods, or conduct themselves oddly. There

may be something in it, but any possible connection between a mind and any such substance is so difficult to comprehend, that I am inclined to doubt the validity of their conviction." If this mind were interested in us, if he wanted to make our acquaintance, he would look us up a little further. If he was contented with his universe as it was, he would naturally dismiss us from his attention altogether. Such a dismissal would not, however, affect the question of our existence in the least.

We then, who hope for a God, need not be deterred from a belief in Him because of too great a difficulty in the conception of a mind without bodily limitations. Must we also believe Him above all mental and spiritual limitations? And if we so believe, are we not sacrificing all meaning in personality? Is there any formulation of God's nature possible, which shall be comprehensible enough to be real, and yet great enough to be more than man, — that is, great enough to be real Divinity? It is almost a paradoxical situation. An absolutely ununderstandable God could be no part of our experience, and a God who could be thoroughly apprehended would have become a finite thing and no God at all. But we

have discovered paradoxes everywhere, and have found that they are not made an excuse for disbelief by those who hope for any issue.

If we are to have what we hope for, what do we want our God to be? What would be possible evidence of such a nature? Is there such evidence? These are our first questions, and to answer them adequately would require a spiritual and poetic imagination to which I lay no claim. I shall simply try to define what most ordinary men and women want when they desire or have become possessed of some religious life.

Which demand shall have expression first depends largely on the individual. It would be a natural consequence of his previous experience whether he asked first for comfort, relief from loneliness, stimulation for better living, or optimistic courage for the future. Since we, however, have started our inquiries, spurred on by intellectual doubt, our first question must be an intellectual one, our first demand will be for a rationalizing of our universe. This, in point of fact, is the question we hear asked on all sides: "What is it all about? Why are we here going through certain motions in an unsatisfactory world? Grant-

ing that there is a God, what possible reason could He have had in setting the universe whirling through its endless and apparently meaningless cycles?" For such questioners, it is absolutely essential that God, whatever else He may or may not do, should express Himself rationally. His nature and man's must have this in common, that both are governed by motive, by meaning, by a certain high sense. Only that character can have dignity which carries out some kind of motive, and we would rather believe the reason for our existence to be almost anything, than believe it to be without reason at all. A God with no reason, with no motive whatever in His creations, would be more difficult of comprehension than any other God, or no God; and certainly rather than accept such a God (for we would never *hope* for Him), we should believe that He did not exist.

Clashing with this demand are two other classic attributes which have been given to God-head for many generations. These are the characteristics of omniscience and omnipotence. These are ascribed to God, not so much because we hope for them, perhaps, as because we feel that they are necessary characteristics of a suitable Divinity. The questioner says

rather wearily, "I suppose God has got to know everything, past, present, and future, because He made it; and if He knows everything that is coming afterwards, what possible point can there be in watching it roll itself interminably out?" This is the depressing atmosphere of fatalism, of predestination, of a complete fore-ordination, — an atmosphere which we breathe only because we conscientiously feel we ought. We feel we must go in for a complete God, if any. If He knows anything, He must of course know everything; if He made anything, He made it all; and for some inexplicable reason He derives a satisfaction from watching His plans work out to their inevitable conclusion.

> With Earth's first clay He did the last man knead,
> And there of the last Harvest sowed the Seed:
> And the first Morning of Creation wrote
> What the last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.
>
> Yesterday this Day's Madness did prepare;
> To-morrow's Silence, Triumph, or Despair;
> Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why;
> Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.

The natural outcome of this view of an omnipotent God is a total loss of responsibility on the part of man. A God who can do

everything He wills, and who willed my actions down to my latest mistake, has got what He wanted. He surely cannot hold me to account for what I have done, since I could not oppose Him if I would.

> But helpless pieces of the game He plays
> Upon this checquer-board of Nights and Days;
> Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
> And one by one back in the Closet lays.
>
> The Ball no question makes of Ayes or Noes,
> But here or there, as strikes the Player, goes,
> And He that tossed you down into the field,
> He knows about it all, He knows, He knows!
>
> What! from His helpless Creature be repaid
> Pure Gold for what He lent him dross allayed!
> Sue for a debt he never did contract,
> And cannot answer — Oh the sorry trade!

It would seem, then, that the ascription of omnipotence and omniscience to our idea of God's existence is not exactly what we would choose if left to ourselves. If our first demand for motive in the creation of the world and of us is to be satisfied, the second demand for all-power and all-knowledge would have to be curtailed. An omnipotence that is able to make puppets of men, and that made the evil as well as the good; an omniscience that knows

to its minutest detail every future event, becomes at once to our understanding devoid of motive. What conceivable reason for watching the play?

It might be that God *could* do anything, but does not choose to; that human beings might have been created with only the automatic reactions of the lower animals, but have been allowed to exercise their own will, which God respects. This voluntary abridgment of His own power would make omnipotence a rational possibility, — otherwise not.

Since we are embarked on a voyage of freedom, and have thereby lost all the advantages of authority and tradition, let us at least not embrace their disadvantages. If we do not want a God whose hand creates everything, even our own actions, and if an entire knowledge of future development seems to deprive creation of motive and makes us ask, "Why such a long time about a world in which novelty is impossible?" — if we do not want all this, let us by all means not have it. Let us not feel obliged to say All-Creator, All-Knower, if such ascriptions do not arise from a profound desire of our soul. We would choose that God should have had a real reason

for the creation of the universe, a reason that somehow includes us. We would choose that His personality should not only respect ours and allow it to make real choices, but that it should love us and help us to make them. His power would then not be the absolute control of an inventor over his machines, but the influence of a stronger personality over weaker ones, an influence which has its limits, and which could be ignored if the weaker person chose to ignore the greater. We clutch, somehow, at the right to disbelieve in God if we choose. We have a childish satisfaction which is nevertheless a real one, in believing that even a God cannot make us have faith where we will not, and that, whereas God in His infinite sympathy will not overlook us, we can if we choose overlook Him. The possibility of disbelief must be as real as that of belief, and whether it abridges God's power or not, we insist on this freedom. We choose, moreover, that some kind of communication be possible between God and ourselves, that His presence may be invoked by some kind of exercise on our part. He is not omnipresent in the sense that He is always communing with us, or that we can always evoke the same

consciousness of His presence. In fact, if He is an unwelcome guest, He can be more and more completely shut out from our universe, until we can be almost certain that He will not speak to us again. We can be without hope, and without God in the world, if we choose. It would seem, by way of parenthesis, that these "all"-attributes have been ascribed more from a literary and æsthetic demand than from a religious one. Surely the Bible gives us to understand that there are stubborn wills, which God, if He will respect them as persons, cannot bend; that there are outcomes which He watches rather than directs, and that there are dark places of the human soul where God is not present. But the Bible aside, — for we have for the present cut loose from authority, — God's nature only has meaning for us if we limit its scope. That is, however it all might have been created otherwise, since the fact remains that we as human beings do exist in the universe as we find it, the only motive for it all must be an end to which we contribute something, and which could not be brought about perfectly without us. We are not chess-men, but collaborators.

We must assume, moreover, if we are to consider the subject any further, that it is possible for us to comprehend to some degree this motive for creation. To say that we demand a God with a motive, and then not to seek for this motive, or at least not formulate a motive that would satisfy us if it were His, would be a very incomplete treatment of the subject. We have presumably been hunting for a motive for creation and have not found one, or perhaps have seemed to find too many. Sometimes the motive seems to be cruelty, sometimes a mere observation of development as such, with no end, or sometimes even a high amusement over man's absurdities. None of these reasons which do not involve a finality, an end wished for which is good in itself, are very satisfactory, and we are fatigued with our hunt. The data of the universe seem to point in all directions and to many possible motives. We shall therefore give up our search and begin the analysis of our real wishes. If we can decide what would be a supremely satisfying motive, and what would be the means of such a will's expression, we may find such an expression at hand, and find, too, that we have a better right to hope for it than for any other.

Suppose we apply ourselves without timidity to the colossal task of trying to imagine ourselves as a God on the eve of Creation. This is surely a daring undertaking for finite minds. "Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?" But when this very question was asked, the prophet, stern and contemptuous though he was of the presumption of weak humanity in addressing questions to its Creator, was obliged to admit that man had a right to inquire, and he trumpeted forth the Lord's answer: "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I, the Lord, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right."

If, then, God has not spoken in secret but in open places, — and He must have so spoken if we are to understand his nature in any degree, — what is the plan, the motive, the reason, that would prompt and justify a universe like ours?

This is a question to be worked out in a great epic and not in the simplest of prose. A poem might be written which should probe further back than "Paradise Lost," or even Paradise Created, to expound the emotions

of a solitary Divinity choosing to create at all. We might very fitly acknowledge at once that the question is too deep for us. But if we are determined to think through all possibilities without reserve, we must ask ourselves, "What could have been the reason?" As we review the over-powering spectacle of the evolution of countless ages, the slow development of new forms and their apparent culmination in man, we are stupefied at the immensity of it all. Perhaps nothing is more astounding than that man — who so plainly is the outgrowth of lower forms, and whose organism bears the traces of the journey which it has traveled — suddenly turns his back on his past, and announces to the rest of creation, "I am like you, you have helped to make me, but I am not of you. We are akin, but you are not my creator. Your society is not enough, I must talk with my God." If we were watching the process of evolution from the outside, perhaps nothing would astonish us more than this. Where did man get this idea? How does he dare to make such an assertion, which his more humble forbears did not dream of? It would almost seem as if this were the moment for which God had been waiting. What could be a more valid

reason for the long work of making a world of men, than that finally the world should turn and assert its own divinity, and provide not a problem alone, but a companion.

Is this anthropomorphic? It is, and what of it? Any Divine motive must be of the same order as a human motive to be in the faintest degree comprehensible to us, and therefore we must fall into either anthropomorphism or agnosticism. There is no alternative, and it is as much an unproved creed to assert that God's motives *cannot* be fathomed, as to affirm that they can. Let us once more assure fearful souls that they are living no more by an unproved faith when they say, "I believe that God is a Person, who has made the world with its culmination in man, for the purpose of companionship with Himself," than if they say, "There is no God, and if there were I could not follow His motives." Some state of the case for or against must be true, and we are no more superstitious to believe what we hope than what we fear. Moreover, while we may say, "I am impartial, I believe absolutely nothing about the matter," we must live, and we must think as if one or the other were true, if we are to live and think at all. And as rational beings

we prefer thought, even upon unproved premises, to either bodily or mental suicide. We could just as reasonably and as zealously devote ourselves to making rational the non-existence of a God, or the absence of His beneficent motives, if that were the issue for which we hoped. To any one who calls us superstitious both in our desire for a God and in our high valuation of man, we can but answer: "We prefer this to the equal superstition of a desire for a mechanical world without God, and a lesser opinion of man's value. Let our opponent make his case rational and we will attempt to make ours so."

Suppose then that a God wants the companionship of persons. That would be an adequate reason for any amount of world-making, for an infinite patience and an unbounded interest in the developing of His plans. It would also imply that a freedom to converse with Him or not to do so must be present in these persons to make their friendship of any value, and that, however different they might be from their Great Companion, they must have certain important characteristics in common. We are assuming for the nature of God only the attributes we must have, only those we long

for; and we will not adopt any others, however classic, unless we want them. We do not long for an omnipotence that forces our choices; for an omnipresence which makes us say, "God is in even the evil desires of our hearts"; for we prefer to assume even the blackest responsibility for them rather than to say that God is part of them. Even an omniscience that makes every detail of the game a foregone conclusion seems an oppressive possession; so we do not admit it as harmonious with the highest reasonableness. We reserve the possibility for the emotions of joy or of disappointment in the Deity we are hoping for, and like to think that we can be even better than was expected of us, as well as worse. We do desire a power that can influence other personalities, as great characters can always influence their kind without depriving them of freedom. Abraham Lincoln was not the only free man among his contemporaries; yet certainly their actions would have been different if he had not existed. Napoleon was not the only person in Europe, nor did Paul deprive all his followers of their wills because he exerted his influence powerfully in one direction. An energy radiates from great personalities, which makes their admirers want to

follow them, just as it makes their opponents want to defy them; and God's power shall be of their character, though of an extent and a might surpassing human examples. He must be always present, in the sense that no spatial limits divide the human soul from His, and that a human being can always call upon Him when he will. On the other hand, the human soul can preserve its own limitations and refuse to admit, not only His presence, but His existence. Sometimes the greater personality insists on certain periods of recognition, — as when Saul of Tarsus was arrested unwillingly on his way to Damascus. Sometimes the greater waits for the summons of the less. As in any other matter, long habit makes intercourse either more easy or more difficult, so that a man may atrophy his power to commune with God if he chooses. Perhaps no one would hope that such a lack of opportunity to commune with His human creatures would atrophy God's power or His willingness to answer a human call.

Our list of attributes does not need to be long. A Divine personality that, for some desire of His own nature, causes a race of men to work itself out through a long stage of de-

velopment, to be companions of Himself and the objects of His supreme devotion, is a simple conception. That this nature shall be supremely good we demand; this we *must* have. That His goodness shall include both justice and sympathy, we also demand, and a power and presence wide enough to give every man an opportunity to guess, in some slight manner at least, His character. That our actions make a real difference in the world's history and that we are to be not simply moved, but watched with an interest in the issue only greater in degree than our own, this we also demand, to give a dignity to human living. Who can say how far he would want this foresight to extend? I do not feel myself less free because my friend knows I will not murder him, or because he feels certain I will not set the house on fire. Neither am I less free because he knows that in all likelihood I shall sometimes lose my temper, or that I may forget my appointments. He knows it because he knows me, but his knowing it does not make it happen. That an Infinite Personality, who has a peculiar access to all minds, which is not given to us, should have a knowledge of events to come, is highly probable, and I

think we should wish it; for however little meaning the words Past and Future have to a timeless Being, if He understands the universe He has made, He undestands the significance these terms have for us. That this fore-knowledge should be complete we certainly do not *crave;* and since an interest in world development seems more rational with some issues uncertain, and since we are at present dogmatic, we shall say His fore-knowledge is not complete.

This, then, is our God, and this is the reason that we have been created. Why just this line of development was chosen, why we are allowed to suffer, why God does not manifest Himself more clearly, we shall consider later. We are interested now simply in finding a reason why a God should want a world with men in it, what a God would want His men to be, and what in turn men want their God to be.

It would certainly be essential that the most important point in God's character should be the one most easily comprehended by man. That is, if the prime feature of His nature were the extent of His knowledge, we should have even more difficulty than we do now in

deciding how much we believe. The fact of the matter is, however, that we do not care so much about how much He knows, as we do about His goodness and His love for us. If we should have reason to think that sometimes God did not *know* what would be the issue of a given struggle, we should not be so much disturbed as if we believed that He occasionally indulged in lapses from goodness. *That* we could not endure. Rather no God than one who is not wholly good. The good character of God is for us all the essential fact of God's character, and, arguing from analogy, very probably it is the first demand He makes of us. However much we may yearn for the love of our Creator, I suppose the most despairing religious penitent would be less revolted by the scorn and wrath of a good God, than by the love of a bad one. The beauty of holiness has at least this charm for us all, that whether we believe it to exist in God or in man, if a God exists at all, that must be His eternal attribute. It would seem almost as if this were of itself enough of a character with which to endow our Divinity; but at any rate we should expect this, the most essential and yet the most easily under-

stood trait of the Divine character, to be the form in which His invitations and His revelations to man would be couched. It is perhaps the only feature of the Divine nature which He can demand of us to share with Him. We are speaking for the present age of course. A million years from now, who shall say? Perhaps man can be more of a companion for his Maker in other respects as well.

We must emphasize the importance of the moral world as our real bond with God, as our common language, because we find, low in the scale of holiness as we feel ourselves to be, that it represents the one claim we have to any universal advance over the lower animals. Some of us, to be sure, have achieved great things in art, most of us have not. Some of us know a great deal, but most of us know very little. I stand with my dog before St. Mark's in Venice; we look together at it, and I realize that I could no more have made it than he. We listen to a Wagnerian opera, and I know I could as little have created it as I could a world. We sit together on the steps of the Parthenon, and look out over the groves of Plato, the Lyceum of Aristotle, the prison of Socrates, and the Mars Hill of Paul, and I

feel that, so far as wisdom is concerned, my dog is more my brother than they. If my salvation depended on my genius for thought or creation, I should be in sorry case. That Michael Angelo could paint a ceiling proves nothing about me, and that he would be a fit companion for a beauty-loving God would prove, if it proved anything, that I could never be. We cannot group the human race in this fashion, and say that we are all stupendous creatures, because some of our species built cathedrals or wrote epics. We know that we are not all of that timber, and that any God who could be revealed only through the life of beauty or of wisdom must be an unknown quantity, not only to us, but to thousands who are even less gifted than we are. That God could reveal Himself in any channel, and that He has so done, is doubtless true; but a just God must make His avenue of approach one easy enough to understand, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein. It may be a blow to our self-love to relinquish any share in these brilliant human achievements, and to admit that they are no more our doing than as if their creators had not happened to be of the same genus as we. But

we always gain by any such sacrifice. Every loss means a certain freedom; and just as I am not related to the achievements of a Leonardo simply because we are both classed physiologically as human, so I am not related to the defects of the animal world because I share a back-bone with my dog, and have a nervous system akin to the frog's. If there were a God-communion possible for a Leonardo, simply through the avenue of art, or one for Kant only through his metaphysics, there would be no such communion possible for the rest of us just because we and these great ones were cousins. So, vice versa, if there is no God-communication possible for the lower animals, we as human beings are not necessarily without a God-language because we too are cousins. The thing that binds us, the humblest of us, with human genius and with God, is our moral likeness, our ability to see an ethical issue, and to choose duty for its own sake. This is our common language; this is the characteristic of God we can understand, however over-powering His knowledge and His power may be.

The biologist may insist, "What folly to consider man as so different from the organ-

isms from which he has sprung. We are all protoplasm together, and how can one branch of the family be called children of God, and the others children of matter?" No doubt it is an astonishing fact that man has reared his head and announced his connection with an invisible Almighty; but the fact that he has done so entitles him to consideration. It all depends on the question whether we find our differences from the animals below us more significant, even if not more numerous, than our likenesses to them. That our kinship with them and our common root with them affect in the remotest degree our possible communication with God, or our destiny as planned by Him, it is difficult to see. Suppose a man surrounds himself with enough steak, potatoes, and water, to last him, say, seven years. At the end of that time, his entire body will be made over. Each cell of his bony and fleshy tissue has been renewed by these three ingredients and the air he has breathed, so that strictly nothing is left of him of the period before he began this diet. Would he thereby consider that he had lost his birthright? Would he be crushed by the sense of being beefsteak or a potato? So far as intimacy of

connection is concerned, and a recreation of each of his cells made possible through theirs, he cannot deny a certain sonship. But he is not of their kin, and he knows it.

Arguing in the same manner (for while the foregoing analogy is not perfect, it may be suggestive), though our kinship with the other animals were more evident than it is; even if we still went on all fours, or lived in trees, as soon as we felt the impulsion of an inward voice of conscience, and chose to talk with our God as well as with our fellows, our difference from the rest of creation would be more profound than our likeness. We should have become to some extent companions of the Deity.

We shall assume, then, that God's motive in creation was to make possible a race of beings who should yearn for Him, and should create an image of Him in their souls, as He had created them out of a kindred desire for their existence. It is this supreme alternative of mutual love or of mutual annihilation that makes man to some extent God's equal.

Granted that this is the most reasonable motive, and perhaps the only motive at once reasonable and sympathetic, that we can con-

ceive for our creation, how could a God communicate with such beings when they were finally evolved, and ready for Him? We can understand that a forced communion with us would have defeated His own end of a voluntary companionship, and that our devotion, if it did not arise from a desire of our own nature, would be too little godlike to be worth the having. On the other hand, was not this freedom to ignore Him a dangerous gift? Did He not with this very dignity of relation between us run the risk of not being able to communicate with us at all? From even a cursory glance at history or present-day society, this seems undoubtedly to be the case. Surely humanity, for long periods and over wide areas, has enjoyed its own society exclusively, with no yearning for the Divine presence; and while doubtless many we know not of have always kept an altar-fire burning, it has not always reflected much light on society at large. Can we fathom to any degree what must have been the effect of such exclusion on the mind of God? What would be the emotion of a Creator in seeing the failure of His ripest work, the indifference of His dearest children? What extra means of com-

munion would He strive to establish? and would there be a point where even a God must say, "I can do no more"?

So far as we know, even the lowest orders of savages have some kind of conception of Deity. However incomplete may be their estimate of Him, and however detached they are from daily communion, to say nothing of friendship with Him, still the existence of an invisible Power seems a possible conception to all human minds. We shall not try to probe too far into the thoughts of historic man, since that involves an ethnological knowledge of which we cannot be certain. But at least this common capacity for conceiving an invisible God, to whom man is under some kind of obligation, seems a universal gift. Just as primitive man talked with his fellows and entered into ceremonials with his kind, he talked and made obeisance before his God. But this was not enough. Certain men who had the sense of communion with God more vividly than others became convinced that God was not simply a power, but a power for righteousness.

This was a further revelation for those who had a desire for something higher; but, just as

before some had doubtless believed and some disbelieved in any God, so now some wanted a good God, and some did not. With certain men God had succeeded, and with others He had failed. Can we not imagine God saying, as indeed He has been interpreted by the prophets, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" or, to translate it into prose, "Is it possible that these men cannot see that goodness is better than sin, that it is folly to ignore a God whom they may have for the asking, only to torment themselves with other godless men who demand a high price for their companionship?" Through those who had come to understand Him, He sent His message, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live"; and periodically in the world's history, because of these special appeals from men who had a more intimate knowledge of God than they, some have inclined their ear and have come, and some have not.

If, then, an inborn tendency to speak to God was not enough to make men believe in Him, if the messages and eloquence of gifted seers did not always open communication, what

could? What was there left to try? No appeal to the sensations in the way of visions, voices, touches, feelings of presence, trances, stigmata, or speaking in strange tongues, could make a very widespread impression. If we are to believe records, every one of these methods was attempted, to arrest the attention of mankind; but the very fact that we seldom believe such reports is evidence enough that we make it impossible for God to speak to us in that way. It is a curious fact that the humblest man may assure us that he exists by speaking to us aloud; but nowadays (whatever may have been the case formerly), even if we admit the theoretic possibility that a God could produce auditory sensations in our minds, few of us consider such a voice convincing. A man who hears an unseen speaker nowadays does not answer, but goes to a nerve specialist; and if we all heard voices, we should consider ourselves mad, but not religious. I am only re-insisting on this point, to indicate how we limit the avenues of communication with a possible God. It is surely an advance to a more spiritual conception of Divinity when we do not depend on sense-stimulation, always provided we do not at the same time disbelieve in Him for not ex-

pressing Himself in a way we should not credit if He did. In the ages when men believed in voices, they heard them; when they disbelieve in them they hear them as heavenly voices no more. The test of validity in any case has always been — the effect on the moral life of the individual. If he is no better than before, if no great resolve results from the interview whether of voices or of thoughts, we question the actuality of his communion. If he becomes a Paul, we are less likely to question the reality of his experience on the road to Damascus.

Let me say right here, that any sharp distinction between God's speaking to our ears and His speaking to our minds is, on closer scrutiny, a meaningless one. What happens when I *hear* a spoken word? What happens when I *think* a spoken word but do not hear it? When I hear a word spoken, it means that air-waves have been set in vibration; they strike against my ear-drum, they are communicated through little bones to my inner ear, whence they are taken up by nerve-endings spread out in the cochlea, and from thence transmitted along the auditory nerve to my brain. There is a particular area of my brain, just behind my temples, devoted to the reception of sound-

stimuli, and if this area were destroyed, I should be as unable to hear as if my ear-drum were gone or my auditory nerve paralyzed. This, then, is the circuit for sound vibrations to make before I can hear a spoken word. If, on the other hand, I merely think a spoken word, but do not hear it, it means that this same brain-area is active, but without the aid of stimuli coming from the outside. The auditory brain-centre has been excited, not by vibrations from outside, but by stimulations from other centres in the brain itself. If this auditory area were destroyed, we could not only not hear sounds, but we could not remember or imagine them.

The only difference, then, between the two situations is, that in one case the excitement comes to the auditory area through the ear, and in the other case from another part of the brain. Any idea you may have — scientifically speaking — is just as causally brought about, whether its stimulus happens to come by way of an ear-drum, or, say, by way of the visual centre in the back of your brain. We must understand this very clearly, so that we may not profess toward any one possible God-manifestation a scorn that we do not toward any other. We cannot in reason sneer against the

voice that Samuel heard, and yet believe in the voice of conscience that we have ourselves. Both are accompanied by brain-excitement of some kind, one by way of the auditory nerve, and one by way of the association-centres perhaps; but in any case both have nervous accompaniment of some kind, and the brain is not a whit more ethereal or spiritual in its essence than the auditory nerve. It is quite plain that, scientifically speaking, there is no room for God anywhere on this nervous circuit. If He is not a material force, He cannot set air-waves in motion to strike against our tympanum without tearing a hole in conservation of energy, — which seems to be one of His universal laws. Just as little could He set up a nervous excitement in our brain and bring an idea into our minds, that would not have followed previous causes. If God put one nervous thrill into a brain-cell, and thereby roused up a cortical stimulation not related to other nervous causes, it would be as much of a break in causal laws, and as unbelievable a miracle, as if He thundered sermons from all the stones. We are, then, much misled if we have taken refuge behind the scientific possibility of conversing with our God in mind, but not in voice.

The possibility of either stands or falls with the other, and it is only by their fruits we shall know them. Our desire for food is physically a matter of certain brain-stimulation and nervous excitement in the throat and stomach; our determination to risk our life for a friend is also accompanied by certain brain excitement, and our affection for our parents has no less nervous stimulation than our desire to go to sleep. We may make as much distinction as we like between the value of these different experiences, but one is no more apart from brain-excitement than the other, and our desire for God neither more nor less than they.

Where, then, in this closed circuit of physical stimulation, which is transmitted along nervous tissue, is there the slightest place for God? Grant that He exists, and that He wants to speak with us, how, from our heights of scientific logic, can we allow Him to? Our nervous systems accompany (Heaven knows why!) every slightest thought or sensation we have with physical, that is, nervous excitement, and how by any possibility can a spiritual God interpose His influence without shattering this closely knit chain of physical cause and effect which He apparently willed, and which we have with

so much pains discovered? After creating His world, is He not confronted with the fact that to converse with His chosen ones is not only difficult, but of its nature impossible?

There is plainly no room for God in the causal universe He has made; and curiously enough there is no room for us either! God's mind and ours have got to walk off the scene together, there is no nook or cranny for either of us! For the case of our own mentality is as impossible of explanation as God's, and the possibility of knowing, myself, what is in my own mind, is as inexplicable as God's knowing it.

If this does not seem a real problem to any reader, I advise him to omit the discussion altogether. It is likely to be a real issue only to those trained to respect the universality of the law of conservation of energy, and to whom it is a point of honor not to abandon this position at any cost.

We are of this loyal band (though here, again, conservation of energy is as much a matter of faith as religion, as no experiment has ever absolutely proved it), and we are not willing to allow our causal universe to be shot through with holes where non-material forces

have brought material results to pass. We are confronted with the following situation as regards our own mental life, and to a scientist who loves above all things a neat array of well-adjusted facts, it is indeed a trying case. We have a perfect physical and nervous connection between outward stimuli and muscular or nervous reaction. The moth flies past my eye, and my eye winks; or in a more complicated situation, the visual stimulus arouses associated brain-cells, finally the motor area is excited, and my hand grasps the moth. In any case, and no matter how complex the experience becomes, brain-cell excites brain-cell, incoming energy goes over into outgoing, and meanwhile what is our mind about? What conceivable connection is there between such nervous processes and a mind? The processes cannot cause the mind and the mind cannot cause the processes; and if they are simply galloping in harness, why are they doing it? Moreover, if we grant that a mind at any present instant knows what is in itself, how can we explain its memories? I have not been thinking what my name is until this moment, yet I had not forgotten it. It was simply out of my mind and now it is in it; and we say, psychologically

speaking, that certain cells corresponding to my name have become stimulated in the speech-centres of my brain. That such stimulation take place we will grant, and yet we might analyze this nervous discharge ever so carefully and still we should find no name in it, and since the name was not in my mind either, where was it? What does *knowing* consist of in this mental realm? It is not an explanation of this question to say anything at all about the brain or nervous system. We will admit at once that every thought, whether of concrete objects or of God, has a physical brain-state lumbering along beside it, that prayer as well as reflex action has nervous analogues from which it does not part. But the mystery of the mind rushing on, clinging to or dropping its memories, unlocalized, creating a constant illusion that it is affecting the constitution of material things (though as sturdy scientists we will not admit that it does), is so inconceivable, that if we were not forced to acknowledge it, we certainly never should. There is absolutely no room for a mind in a causal universe, and the ardent logician would gladly give his up if he could, to prove his point. For this reason psychology has its incessant recourse to physio-

logy. It cannot keep its balance in the surging currents of mental life, without standing on the firm ground of its physiological accompaniments. It first of all tries to link a mental fact to a nervous one; then with a breath of relief goes on talking about the nervous substructure, because mind of itself is so hard to manage. The point of all this digression on the profound mystery of a mind keeping itself distinct from other minds, and clinging to one nervous system with which it has no conceivable connection, is just this: while it has been taken for granted that a healthy nervous system is a very effective means of allowing us to come into contact with our neighbors, it could just as well be said that any nervous system at all is a perfect device for keeping all our minds apart! Because my mind is weighted with a running mate that occasionally goes astray, or too fast, or too slow, and because your team has similar peculiarities, — just for this reason you are you, and I am I. If all our organisms were identical we could approach a one-ness of sensations, of emotion, of sympathy, such as we can now experience only in what we call our highest moments, when we come nearest together in a common cause. As it is, not only geographical

difference, but every bias of habit and heredity, grafts into our nervous make-up a disparity that makes us able to be of one mind with but few human beings. We can say that such variety is what makes life interesting, but perhaps we shall see later that the one-ness of harmonious minds does not mean a real loss of individuality, and that the highest attainment of a person is to forget that he is one.

Now suppose a mind not linked with any nervous system (and we have seen that theoretically it is even more reasonable than the opposite case), what is to prevent its linking itself with the nervous system of any mind that asks it?

Everything that passes through the human mind is that mind's own property, so far as other human minds are concerned. The impedimenta of other minds prevent their penetrating to ours. But supposing the mind of God mingled with the stream of our own consciousness, using our tools, adapting itself to our limited capacities, and becoming for the time being part of our mind, — is not that really what we mean by communion with God, and is it any more inconceivable than communion with myself?

Even here God cannot force a way. Just as with an articulated message from God, we could always affirm that it thundered, that the wind was blowing, that it was the sound of rushing water, so with a God-consciousness mingling with ours we can say, we were excited, it was suggestion, the result of emotional fatigue, etc., etc.; and if we do not hope for a God, we need not credit Him. We may always call all our thought our own. Who shall judge but ourselves? But if we will not admit the possibility of a God speaking to us, it is equivalent to saying, "If there were a God, by no possibility through endless ages could He speak with the men He has created"; and by such a conclusion we make any conceivable God weaker than we are ourselves.

God if He exists planned our development. The only reason we can conceive for such a creation is the desire to communicate with us; the only way even a God can speak with man is through man's mind, and the duty remaining for a man is that of listening.

It is a difficult piece of work for a child to begin to talk or to understand, but he learns because he wants to. If he did not want to, he could live his life in silence. It is a hard

matter at first to distinguish the mind of God from our own. If we want to, however, we shall learn both to speak and to understand. If we do not want to, we shall not learn; and in time, if we are careful to practice indifference, in all probability God will not trouble us further. It is our privilege to create such a God as we have done in our universe, or not to do so, as it was His to create or not create us in His.

IV

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

If my readers are at all like the usual speculator on religious problems, they are by this time exceedingly restive. Some one is doubtless saying, "What I wanted was a conclusive proof that God exists — all that I have is an even chance. I am entitled to believe, if I choose, what has just fifty per cent of a chance of being a falsehood, and that is no basis for a faith." We can only reiterate two things. First, you *do not want* a convincing proof. A thorough proof means that God would be within the range of science or logic, that is, a measurable finite quantity, and hence no God. Second, we are coming to see that the chances are more than half in favor of a God. We have tried to start from the most meagre allowance of faith and knowledge that any one who had enough intelligence to ask the question at all could have, but we must now take a wider view. We are still assuming that we want a God, and that we want to know His nature more thoroughly. Are there not degrees of

probability, which point more decidedly in one direction than another, even though they do not prove the issue absolutely?

Suppose that an extraordinary invention has appeared on the market, and there is some doubt as to who is its author. The man who could have devised such a thing has just died, so that we cannot get a direct answer from him, and we can only decide the matter by probabilities. A good many scientists had been working along the same lines, and the question is, "Is this particular machine his or theirs?" Our decision must rest upon our estimate of the invention and of the man. If it is considered sufficiently extraordinary we say the great man must have made it. If, on the other hand, we do not think it is very remarkable, we decide that the other men may have done so. Even witnesses' testimony would not weigh against this decision by estimate. If the invention is too wonderful for a small man to have made, we will not believe him, no matter how often he assures us that he was its author; if, on the other hand, it is commonplace, no one is interested to deny the authorship of any one who cares to claim it. Any one would have a right to call us stubborn if we refused to

admit that a great inventor had probably been the contriver of some unique device, even though from the nature of the case, no one could prove it. It all depends on whether we consider the invention too great to have been made by any but the most able scientist, no matter how many lesser men may assert the contrary.

If, moreover, the invention was something we wanted very much and had been looking for, and if we had reason to believe that the absent inventor would have had special interest in this kind of a thing more than all others, we should loyally feel it to be much safer to erect a monument to him in token of our appreciation, than to leave him unrecognized because we could not prove our point. Not only the point would not be proved, but nothing could prove it. The man is gone, his laboratory and papers were burned, and voices from the dead, angels in the sky, or any cataclysm one's imagination can devise would not prove the point further than this: that the thing bespoke the authorship of the only man who could have made it.

We can see at once that most of our ordinary decisions in life are not based on proofs

at all, but on likelihood, plus inclination, plus a certain capacity in the most able of us to tell at a glance the significance of certain earmarks of truth. We call a man unreasonable or eccentric if he does not accept the probable explanation of a thing, even though he may never get access to a proof. It is to our credit that we regard the matter of our religious life as demanding a more serious treatment than the decision as to who took our umbrella. But this seriousness becomes mistaken, when we set ourselves to demand a proof that we do not want, or refuse to accept an evidence that we find fulfills every demand that we can honestly make.

The question of Christ's divinity depends essentially on the same sort of evidence; and if we are to argue in the same fashion that we are obliged to in ordinary matters, we must admit that the chances are rather more than half in favor of His being a special revelation.

But some one may object that in our illustration one thing was taken for granted, that in the religious question is not so certain. We were then sure that there had been an inventor, while we are not certain enough even

now that God exists, to permit such conclusions as to His probable handiwork. Of course, if we are to progress in any argument, we must, simply for the sake of the discussion if nothing more, consider a point settled for the time being, and pass on to another. We are now convinced that it is essential for life and for logic to believe something, to hold one of two opposite alternatives, and we know that we have as good a right, and a reasonable inclination, to choose the alternative we prefer. We will assume, then, in the present chapter that we have chosen to believe in such a God as we have described, and that the hypothesis of God's *existence* shall be considered as firmly established as possible. Our concern now is only this: granting such a God, is there any reason to believe that Christ is His especial manifestation? Are our chances here only half and half as before, or has our acceptance of the first tenet made the second more necessary? Once on the path of one alternative, are we to have an easier time of it?

It seems to me decidedly that we are. Granting our God, a Christ seems more highly probable than otherwise; and granting a Christ, we are equally driven to belief in a

God. We have granted our God, so we must try to find the absolute reasonableness of such a manifestation of Himself.

There are two types of difficulty which one faces in considering this question. One man finds it impossible to conceive how a human being could exist with the peculiar connection with God which believers find in Christ. Others, granting the possibility, fail to find evidence in Christ Himself of such a connection. These difficulties are exactly the same in character as those which we met in our search for evidences of God. Some of us could not conceive how such a Being could exist at all, while others failed to find convincing proof of His existence, granted its conceivability. Or, in the words of our illustration, some of us find the invention too astonishing and too intricate to be real; while others of us, admitting that the stories of this mechanism are correct, do not consider it remarkable enough to point to a very distinguished inventor.

Is it, then, conceivable that God should at some time have taken complete possession of a human frame, instead of partial possession? Can we mean anything different from this when we say the Divinity of Christ? And if

a man acts in every way through his life as we are bound to admit that God, in our highest ideal of Him, would act in a similar position, are we not forced to say that he is the expression of God's own person? If the perfection of a man's life would not convince us that he was in a certain sense set apart from the rest of us as a God-man, is there any conceivable trait of mind, body, estate, that would offer sufficient proof of it? Or is our attitude this: "I will grant that God if He chose might take full possession of a human frame, and that if He did so, I would call such a person Divine in character; but no possible traits of character would convince me that any man had such a nature. Nothing conceivable would ever make me think that any man was a Christ."

This position is plainly illogical. Either a hypothesis is alive or it is dead. We are not making the possibility of God's expression of Himself in human form a live hypothesis, unless we will accept some thinkable kind of evidence as sufficient to substantiate it one way or the other. Either I must say, "I will accept any man as an entire expression of God who is perfectly wise, or perfectly beauti-

ful, or perfectly good," or admit any other characteristics, or group of them, as sufficient ground for acceptance; or else I must say, "It is impossible that any man could be an expression of God"; and we have thereby killed this hypothesis, and must support another one, giving reasons for an opposite conviction. But we must not, in our case, say that the Divine man is a dead possibility, because we have already admitted that if God can at any time, and for the shortest duration, take partial possession of a human mind, and thereby of his body, He can theoretically occupy the body and be absolutely identified with the mind of a man throughout his whole life. This is as possible as that any mind can occupy any body. A Christ is then conceivable, and the only question left is whether we have such a Christ or must look for another.

In the first place, do we want a Christ at all? If not, nothing obliges us to pursue the subject further. Moreover, would such a God as we have formed for our ideal want a Christ? Is there a high reasonableness that, after the revelations of Himself in human minds, after some special revelations through men more spiritually gifted than others, after a long

world-history where virtue had come to gain a certain value, after man had groped for a God and many had found Him with only these first means, — is it reasonable that God should say, "I will give them myself not only as a Conscience, as a Law, as a World, as a Deity, but as a Man? Is there anything more that I can do?" And is there anything else thinkable that He could have done? So far as I know, although many have found the evidence for what God has done insufficient to prove that He did it, no one has offered a suggestion as to what would be accepted as a proof of His authorship if it were produced. No one who finds Christ's appearance an unreasonable demonstration of a Deity has told us what would be more reasonable; and until any one can do so, we must accept what seems to us the most fit. That it had seemed a reasonable expectation to some men is certain, in that long before Christ's birth the coming of a Messiah was looked for. They did not picture Him exactly as He was. Because of His very absence they could not know the kind of a God that He declared His Father to be, and hence could not know exactly how such a God would express Himself. But their conception of a Messiah

at least kept pace with their idea of a God, and that God would some time appear on earth they confidently hoped. There is perhaps no more impressive line of figures in the great Sistine ceiling than those seated groups of shadowed forms, quietly and solemnly looking forward to their hoped-for Saviour. These figures are often overlooked, for the more striking portrayals of the Creation and the Fall; but there they sit, unconcerned, with the glory about them, eternally looking into the distance for the Messiah who shall be born. That mighty painter who did not hesitate to attempt the form of God as well as of men, might have added another picture in which the Creator Himself should gaze past His earlier work to the great manifestation of Himself which was to be, and as much longing would have been in His expression for this last possible link between Himself and His children, as we see already in the faces of those patient watchers.

It is reasonable, then, that God should plan such a revelation; and since we have already decided that perfect knowledge, beauty of form, size, power, and all the other attributes already named are not essential to our idea of

God, it follows naturally that the form His incarnation would have to take would be simply perfect goodness, nothing more and nothing less. A man with unlimited knowledge would impress us mightily, but not as being divine. Such men have currently been supposed in league with the Evil One rather than with God, if their wisdom was too extensive to be canny. Handsome men, long-lived men, powerful men, gifted men, in fact, every sort of man has existed or may conceivably exist without impressing us as especially related to a God; but a good man, and above all a *perfectly* good man, must give us pause. Since this is above all the characteristic we demanded in God, since this, in fact, was the only aspect of the ordinary man that made him essentially different from the animals, we should expect that this would be the paramount feature of the man in whom God should perfectly express Himself. There have been good men always, there always will be. The only difference between the divine man and the good man is that one is perfectly good, and the other is not, — and this is all the difference in the world.

Nothing is ever gained by suppression of

our honest conviction, and some of us must admit at once that goodness does not impress us as very striking. We are conscious of a distinct feeling of disappointment when we think that perfection of goodness is all that we are to find in our Divine Man. Certainly Christ's contemporaries felt this disappointment, and many of them refused to believe that such a simple affair as perfection of virtue was enough to assert divinity. With them as with us, however, there is considerable confusion when we try to formulate what else we want if goodness is not enough. No one, so far as I know, has been able to state what other trait of character he would wish added; but we all have perhaps a vague desire for tempests and earthquakes rather than for a still small voice. This we must admit is rather childish, and a demand that will not survive a close analysis. Whatever our irrational desire for more dazzling characteristics, we must admit that, after all, goodness is sufficient unto itself, so long as it is perfect. But here rises another objection: How are we to know that Christ was perfect? There have been many good men; we have known some ourselves in whose characters we could discover no flaw,

and yet neither we nor they considered them divine.

Here I believe we find the crux of the whole matter. Good men — men even so good that we do not venture to find any evil in them — are noticeable for the fact that they do not consider themselves perfect. Far from that, their very goodness makes them sensitive to certain defects in their own nature which we cannot see, and which perhaps we are too dull to notice in ourselves. They do not call themselves perfect, or if they do, our enthusiasm for them cools, and we consider that their very satisfaction is a blemish, even though it may be the only one. If we really think the matter through we see that the final judge of a man's perfection of character must be himself after all. There comes a certain point of outward goodness — of fulfillment of every obligation of kindness, generosity, and self-sacrifice — where an outsider must admit he can point to no duty unperformed, no grace of character visibly lacking, and only the man himself can know whether he has really expressed God's will entirely and is become a perfect embodiment of divinity. If a man makes such an assertion, and we feel that he

has no right to consider his life such a standard of virtue, we are shocked and disgusted with him more than we should be if he had committed some more dangerous sin. We are careful of our ideals. We resent a pretense of virtue more than an actual vice, because if our standard becomes confused, what is our guide? With an open sinner we know how to deal.

The situation is this. When a man says that he expresses divine perfection, his statement is either blasphemous, insane, or it is true. All of these interpretations were put upon the assumption of Christ. When He quietly affirmed before Pilate and the priests that He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, the high priest rent his clothes and asked what further witness of His blasphemy was necessary. Others considered Him a madman, and still others believed His testimony. There seems to be no other course to take. Either He spoke the truth, or He did not; and if not, His assertion was a voluntary misstatement, or it arose from an uncontrollable aberration of mind. If they did not believe Him, it was more reasonable to take this offense seriously than to let it pass with indifference. It would indeed be a more serious state of affairs than it is in the world,

if it were considered a light matter for a man to assert his absolute oneness with God.

We all consider Paul a good man, who died with the assurance that he had fought the good fight; and yet Paul could never free himself from the conviction of his own sin. Stephen was a good man, but he died with a vision of Christ in glory, and not with a revelation of himself as returning to his native sphere. Good men ever since the world began have lived and died with a more or less triumphant conviction that they have finished the work that was given them to do, but never do we tolerate the assumption that they have been wholly what God would have been in their place; and indeed such assumptions are conspicuously absent from the noblest characters. Their feeling of imperfection is in direct ratio to their spiritual life, with the exception of Christ. He used His own name and the name of His Father interchangeably, and affirmed that no one knew the real nature of God but Himself and those who learned of the Father through Him. Do we feel the same distrust of such an assumption that we should feel if Paul had said, "Come unto me, Paul, and I will give you eternal life"? Should we

honor the noble martyrdom of Stephen if he had called out to his persecutors, "Hereafter shall ye see Stephen sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven"? No, most of us feel a right, a fitness in Christ's making such statements, which we deny to the best of good men. Or if we do not feel such a right (and many nurtured in other creeds doubtless do not), why do we not? Let some one who calls this man blasphemous or mad, instead of God-like, tell us what trait He lacks, what fault He showed, what kind of a man God incarnate must be if we are to believe His testimony! If Christ were the expression of God, He must not only have known it, but He must necessarily have said so. We believe the verdict of good men on themselves, we believe the testimony of a righteous witness; or if we disbelieve, we must produce a reason for it, as we should expect the world to give a valid reason for disbelieving us. We have no right to call Christ insane for no other reason than that He made such statements concerning Himself, if His life was otherwise normal, and if the statement is not in itself unthinkable. We have found that such an expression of God was not only think-

able, but to be expected. Moreover, it had been expected, and we must have some other reason for disbelief when He comes, than simply the stupendous nature of an assertion which if it were true must be stupendous, and which must be asserted by the man Himself.

On one occasion Christ seemed to deny His own goodness. A man came to Him saying, "Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" thereby taking a casuistic view, as if one good deed added to another would bring a total that should entitle the doer to a suitable reward. He asked Christ as a man who had done enough good deeds to enable Him to give advice, and Christ repudiated such a view of Himself, and refused to be called good. His goodness consisted of His Father speaking through Him, not of this, that, or the other thing he might have done. But neither here nor in any other record of Jesus, do we find a hint of regret for any of His deeds. There is no feeling of imperfection, no longing for a more complete spiritual life, — a state of affairs unprecedented in the case of any man so sensitive to sin and so simple in his whole life as He. If He spoke an untruth in claiming to be one with God,

the greatest prophet in the world was mad or a hypocrite. Moreover, He must have been mistaken on the most essential point of all, — His own relation with the God whom He was interpreting. Is it easier to believe this, or to believe that what He said was true, and that the Messiah for whom the world had been looking had really come?

This is, however, not quite enough to say concerning the assumption of Christ. Since any expression of God in the visible world must take on the limitations of time and space, it comes thereby within the domain of history; and while that gives an additional evidence, it brings an additional burden. So long as an acquaintance with God is simply a matter of my own experience, no one but myself can affirm or deny it, and I have the advantage and the disadvantage of its being unassailable by outside influence. If, however, this expression of God has become an historical fact, I have the advantage of its tangibility, the support of many minds, but also the difficulty that some one may say the history is incorrect or the interpretation has been false. We cannot be certain of history as we can be sure of experience; and if any one calls in

question the data, the facts, the authenticity of the record, we cannot answer in just the same manner that we could for a denial of the laws of logic. We have here vividly impressed upon us what earlier in our discussion we found it difficult to believe, namely, that a God-expression which we can see and touch presents difficulties for belief, that the most ineffable idea of Him does not. We thought we wanted a God who would appeal to us through a sense-experience; finally one is given to us, and we are more troubled than before. No one was more conscious of this than Christ. He said Himself, "A prophet is without honor in his own country"; and since God by His very human expression has become in a certain sense one of our countrymen, we find the same difficulty in accepting Him that was found by His own neighbors. The records may be incorrect, perhaps He did not make these assertions about Himself,—certain words have been interpolated by His followers; He was not mad Himself, but His followers were misguided, undeveloped, too anxious to found a new creed, *et cetera*, and what we really have left is only the record of another good man too highly prized by certain con-

temporaries, as He was too little prized by others.

All this is the weakness to which any historical record is liable, and we must base our belief, not on the reliability of this or that manuscript, on the latest reading of this or that clause, but on the supreme reasonableness of the character as presented, and the question whether a nature of this quality could have been invented by any one, much less by the humble followers with whom Christ began His ministry. If we decide that this nature is too great for human contrivance, that it really must have existed, no matter whether one man or another wrote the texts; if the character as pictured is a harmonious whole as it stands, and if this whole has a certain quality too great for other authors, we shall say God was its author, as Christ said of Himself. I think the criterion of the whole matter is, Do we actually think Christ's nature as presented, is very wonderful? Do we find it fits in so well with our conception of God that it is positively easier for us to believe His assertions as they stand, than to question their authenticity? Ease of one alternative or the other is after all our usual guide. The sun

apparently moves around the earth, and that visible course seems to some minds a more conclusive argument for such a path than anything we can say to the contrary. We, on the other hand, have so many correlated facts for the other hypothesis, that it is easier to deny the evidence of our eyes than to deny these facts. The difference between the two sides is that one puts a higher valuation on one line of evidence than the other. All of us have certain demands that must be satisfied in any argument, and we should prefer to call a matter unexplained, than to accept an explanation that left this demand unsettled. Suppose we return to the illustration of the invention. Some one finds in my possession a perfectly constructed flying-machine, which I assure him I made myself. Three comments are open to him: he may say, "I believe it," or "I don't believe it," or "What of it!" That is, either he accepts it, or he does not accept it, or he is indifferent to the whole matter. If he does not think it very extraordinary, he may believe that I was the constructor. But in proportion as he realizes its remarkable perfection, and in proportion as he knows me, he will become more and more

incredulous, and he will end by saying that it is evident that some one who knows more of mechanics than I do must have been its creator. But I assure him that I must have done it. Any one can tell him that no one else has been on the premises; it is not so remarkable as to be outside my powers, and I may be even deluded into believing what I say. But if he is sufficiently convinced that the machine is a wonderful one, he will answer, "I do not know who made it; its presence here is mysterious, and you think you are telling the truth. But I know you too well. You are absolutely incapable of making a flying-machine, and it is easier for me to believe that it came from any other source in the world, than that you were the inventor or the constructor."

It is always open to a man to be unimpressed with anything, however unusual it may be. A man has the right to blink indifferently at a whole galaxy of flying-machines careering through the landscape, and refuse to consider the matter worth a second look; but we at least are not of this class. Either we are so struck with the sublimity of Christ's character, and His absolute satisfactoriness as

a revelation of God's nature, that to believe in Him seems easier than to credit His creation to a few uneducated fishermen, or even to a great theologian; or we are *not* so impressed, in which case the latter possibility seems more reasonable.

Now, provided that we can detect no flaw in Christ's character, and that we cannot suggest any virtue or mark of nobility which we would add to make it our ideal, we must admit that it is not alone that we are not impressed with Christ's goodness, but that we are not impressed very mightily with goodness in general! Unless we can imagine something higher that we want, we must confess that this is the highest, but that the highest is no great matter after all. If we say this, we are striking our blow at God's character, and not alone at Christ's; and this is a very serious dilemma into which we have allowed ourselves to drift. A thing must be the best if it is all that we can conceivably want; and if we have the best and do not want it, we are like aliens who have wandered into Paradise, and find it not to their taste.

There was a parable spoken once about the lord of a vineyard who sent messengers to

inspect his domain and collect the fruit of it. The messengers were badly treated, and he said, "I will send my son! surely they will reverence him." They did not reverence the son, and why not? Because they did not reverence the father.

The case would have been different if they had reverenced the father, and yet had doubted whether this messenger were the son as he announced himself to be. They would have respected any one from the lord of the vineyard, whether he were his son or not; and though the son would have regretted their doubt of him, yet if their love for his father were great, he would not have been too hard on their disrespect. Since the Son of Man appeared in a world of time and sense, and since religion must not depend on such an expression, He acknowledges that the conviction of God is the most essential. A knowledge of Christ depends on historical information. If that were all-important, the uninformed, the misinformed, and those who were born too soon, would be irretrievably robbed of the necessity of their souls, and surely that could not be just. But even if the unbelieving workers in the vineyard who still loved the

lord were to be forgiven for their doubt, were they losing anything by it?

Was Christ's coming simply another revelation, or a different one? Is there a progression in God's expression of Himself, so that if one loses the last, one loses not only a part, but the greatest? Moreover, is there a satisfaction to be derived from a religion with Christ in it, that one cannot find in a religion without Him? To this latter question at least there can hardly be two answers. The Christian religion has stood for a joyous view of life, a serenity of disposition, as no other creed has ever done. The Jewish religion, from which it sprang, was dignified, noble, and possessed of a high imaginative fire which the Christian also appropriates to himself. But its greatest teachers were always looking forward with a passionate eagerness to the fuller revelation that was to be. Their God was just and terrible. His vengeance on their sins was more real than His love, and there was a division of feeling among themselves as to immortality. Their ideal of righteousness was stern, lofty, and unattainable; but that the sorrowful man should be comforted, or the solitary man find a friend in God, hardly crossed their minds.

They needed comfort and companionship as much as any other men, but when, like Job, they lifted up their voices to ask why the world should be as it is, they were too overcome by the inscrutability of Jehovah to hope to find an answer. Can we not imagine God as saying, "Can they not see what I am? Can they not read my tenderness as well as my anger?" And to answer the eternal question for whose answer the best men of all ages had been searching, Jehovah humbled Himself, to show them that the important element of His nature was not His power, which men could not achieve, but His goodness, which they might.

It is nothing against His revelation, that other men had had visions of the same ideal. In fact, there seems a special fitness that it should have come to pass after the mighty Jewish prophets and those Greek giants of thought had done their best but had missed the whole. No one who reads of the lives of Plato and Socrates, their noble ideals, their glimpses of a divine love, can fail to be struck with their nearness to the Christian religion. Far from weakening the Christian message when it comes, it is an added support to it

that the highest strivings of the human mind all pointed in one direction, and that Christ came not to destroy but to fulfill. Who would believe in a religion that ran counter to the ideals of all good men who had lived before, and what more could a God do than quietly to set His seal upon the best, and live it before our eyes?

Man had hoped before that God understood him, he had wondered if He did, and now he finds that it is an assured fact. If there is to be an assurance of God's absolute understanding of every man, He must have experienced triumphantly all that a man must face. He must be poor, for most men are poor; He must live an obscure life with no striking opportunities, for most men live such a life. He must be unappreciated and misunderstood, He must suffer as only a few men are called upon to suffer, and He must even pass through that horror which perhaps all men with a great mission have faced, when they have almost doubted themselves and have called out as Christ did, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Some men are burdened with such a temperament that they cannot see God clearly, no matter how they try; and even they have

a sympathizer in Christ, who passed through the same darkness.

Is it possible that there exists any one who would not be comforted to feel that the God of the whole earth knew as a man knows, his sorrow over the death of a friend, his discouragement over unappreciated work, his restiveness in a youth of forced inactivity, his solitude amid men of another temper? That this is what men do want is shown plainly enough by the comfort that believers get from their convictions, and that it is what men wanted from all time, one has only to read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah to see.

To any who say, "You believe this only because you want to," we can answer boldly, "You believe the opposite because you want to." If they deny this, and say, "We do not believe the opposite because we want to, but because we cannot do otherwise; we would gladly share your richer faith, but we are unable to," the matter stands differently. There was a time when John the Baptist, that voice crying in the wilderness that the Messiah had come, doubted the authenticity of Christ's mission. He had seen the divine character of Christ before any one else had seen it, and had

affirmed it when others doubted. He had been imprisoned for his passionate preaching, and now in the gloom of prison he sends messengers to Christ and says, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" There is perhaps not a more humanly pathetic touch in the whole Bible than this. The doubt was so plainly the result of fatigue and of disappointment; or perhaps, more than all, it was the reaction that comes to every intense nature after declaring itself; the tendency to doubt what it has most vehemently believed. The situation is so natural, so human, and the nobility of both characters is so touching. John doubted the reality of Christ's mission, and whom did he ask to dissipate his doubt, but Christ Himself? He knew no other way to turn for an answer. And Christ understood him so perfectly that He entered into no discussion of the matter. He sent word to the prisoner that the same works were being performed, it was all just as it was before, only he in prison had forgotten it. Who of us believes that John was not reassured? Who of us believes that real faith depends on the ups and downs of emotional buoyancy?

The feeling of certainty is a detachable one.

Some of us are without it altogether, and, though we might stake our lives on an issue, would never feel certain of it; while others of us always feel certain of one thing or its opposite, even where our reason tells us we have no right to do so. We cannot all feel certainty to the same degree, and we must not demand it of ourselves. But any man, no matter how unfortunate his emotional endowment, if he persistently asked Christ for the removal of his doubt, as John did, while he might never attain the triumphant faith which is given to more sanguine minds, might feel that by this very lack he was entering more deeply into the greatest of human experiences, — that longing which hopes where it sees nothing. Perhaps he has a deeper vision of Christ's own sorrow, and by his own blindness understands Christ's last agony, better than we.

Does this make God too common? If He has been human, and has lived on earth in complete control of one nature, instead of in fragmentary control of our several ones, do we find our Ideal of a great God has suffered? I think not. It is noticeable in every-day life, that the nobler the character, the simpler it becomes; and its simplicity, far from detract-

ing from its grandeur, accents it. We are embarrassed by the chief of police, and we quail before a "sales-lady," but we are at home immediately with a great man. That such a man dresses as other men do, that he eats and sleeps, we sometimes think would shock us, would make him seem too small; but in reality it does nothing of the kind. Clothes, even mean clothes, cannot belittle a great spirit; they rather take on a certain grandeur from the form which carries them.

If we are disturbed by such simplicity, if we are more impressed by strangeness and a wild eye, by an ermine robe or a prancing steed, it bespeaks our own littleness. Christ Himself asked the same question of those who were apparently startled by His normality; "What went ye out for to see? A reed shaken by the wind, or a man clothed in soft raiment?" And elsewhere He comments on such people, and says how impossible they were to satisfy. They, like some of us, were offended when a man deported himself like John, and in the vehemence of his enthusiasm laid himself open to the charge of madness. And again, when one lived simply and normally with his fellow men, as did Christ, they found

Him too natural for their taste. They, like some of us, did not know what they wanted, and were afraid that neither normality nor abnormality befitted God's expression. Since, however, most men, from the very nature of the word, are normal, Christ must be so too, in every respect but the unprecedented character of His Spirit.

He Himself put no great emphasis on His miracles. He told His disciples that they would work greater wonders than He had done, and He admitted that the Pharisees and their children cast out devils as well as He. Certain wonder works had been common through all history, — sometimes performed by good men, and sometimes by bad. Aaron cast his rod before Pharaoh and it became a serpent; Pharaoh's magicians did as much, and we can hardly blame the monarch that he was not impressed. Sometimes a prophet performed a mighty deed, and sometimes a witch. The situation is in nowise different to-day, and we are quite right when we refuse to accept an unusual power of this kind as a divine manifestation. Christ placed no more emphasis upon such phenomena than any man need do to-day. He never called them miracles, in the sense

that they transcended any natural law; and no one is obliged to, or indeed should have any disposition so to do. If one does, in fact, it seems to put an emphasis upon them which they do not deserve, and diverts the attention from the more important traits of His character. It obliges us to consider as divine messengers all who perform the same acts, instead of seeing God in those who reflect His character. We should be in sorry case if all who healed the sick, noble as that calling may be, must be accepted as nearer the Deity than those who do not.

It is sometimes urged that Christ called Himself the Son of Man more than He did the Son of God, and that He meant thereby that His nature must not be over-rated. But it seems rather to point in the other direction. Why should any human being emphasize the fact that he is a son of man? What else should he be? Surely nothing could be more meaningless than that a man, who is obviously a son of man, should say so. The only point in such reiteration of His kinship with man is that He felt His kinship with God as so much more striking, more apparent, that if anything were likely to be forgotten, it would be His

human nature. His mission was not to impress man over again, that God was God, and that man was man. That the world knew already. His message was that God could be a man, and that men might be divine. He came to tell us not so much that He was the Son of God as that we are sons of God, and for that reason He calls Himself the Son of Man and us the sons of God.

Does not this assertion carry many other things with it? Can we even ask whether we are immortal or not, after such a revelation? Has God gone through this long period of development to make us, only to lose us again? Can any nature that has linked itself with the Divine be lost, unless God Himself is finite? As to the immortality of those who have lost connection with Divinity what shall we say? Do they want immortality, or do they prefer to be without it? Here is a field into which I cannot enter from lack of testimony. In my experience, just so far as people have been irreligious they have not been interested in their own eternal Nature. An existence of the sort they have at present, they could not have, and do not want. Neither does existence of any other kind, with or with-

out a God, appeal to them. Whether such a state of mind can eventually effect its own suicide, its own annihilation, who shall say? Logically, if a man may have faith, other things being equal, in what he hopes for, we may leave such a possibility to those who so hope.

To those whose imaginations are fascinated and tormented by the thought of other worlds and systems extending to the farthest fixed star and beyond, the conviction that the God of them all lived thirty-three years of His eternity on this dust that we call our earth, is an awful but an unspeakable comfort. Only thus can they face the universe with courage.

V

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

It will seem an astonishing statement to those whose minds are burdened with the misery of this world, with its crime, its innocent suffering, and sudden death, to say that after all we have what we want! They will protest, "We do not want the innocent to suffer, we do not want man to sin, we do not want to die," and we can only answer as emphatically, "Yes, you do."

This may seem little less than madness, but we must carefully analyze this situation as we have the others. We must picture our world without punishment falling on innocent as well as guilty, without the possibility of sin, and without death, and see if such a world is one in which we should care to live. Our view must be a broad one. It is not a case for complaining of individual instances. We cannot point to this case where a child was injured by a drunken father, or to that where an only son was killed in war, or to another where a moral weakness has been discovered

in a man hitherto supposed upright. We must investigate principles instead. If we refuse to admit these injustices and weaknesses as harmonizing with an idea of a just God, do we mean by that, that parents should not have any real responsibility over their children, and that society should not have the capacity to kill its members, or to over-tempt them, if society so chooses? That society does so choose and so act is an evidence that the world in general is getting what it wants, granted that some of its own by-products are bitter even to itself.

If we admit, then, that the world in general is suited with its lot (otherwise it would change it in certain important respects), is it possible for the individual in such a world ever to be happy? Is there any connection whatever between the individual and the over-individual will of society? Must we all partake of one another's desires and achievements, of one another's virtues, and one another's sins?

It would certainly seem that there is such a connection, and that the world was planned to run on the basis of each personality forgetting itself in the greater whole. Because we

do not so forget ourselves, and because we insist instead on a certain separateness instead of brotherhood, result all the hitches, the differences, the disasters which we deplore. Yet here as always we are illogical. If we really want this isolated personality, why do we regret its normal consequence? If we do not want this isolation, but a community of interest with other natures as well as with our own, why do we not live it? That some of us do and some of us do not, illustrates the confusion that always results when a house is divided against itself.

It may seem at first as if we were contradicting what we have already said about personality. We have been insisting that we were created that we might each of us be a separate addition to the world. Each of us is being trained to be a companion of God, and as such we are not God, and we are not each other, but always very definitely ourselves. But this truth like many others has expanded under our scrutiny, and we are forced to ask the question, "Am I really most myself when I am most conscious of it? Am I not really more of a person when I have apparently lost my identity altogether in a cause, or in an

experience of æsthetic ecstasy, or in religious communion? Is Self-Consciousness desirable, or is it to be gained only to forget?" We can illustrate this question and its answer, entirely within the limits of a single person's experience. To begin with, we all have had difficulty in learning to manage our own body. We could not walk without thinking, "now this leg and this arm so, now balance until the others can be brought into position." We learned our language in the same way, and every time we study a new one we go through the same painful process: "I must sound gutturals so, and this must be nasal and that must be sibilant"; and all our muscles and ideas are as separate as possible, only to be forced into harness with the greatest difficulty. When we are learning more complex affairs, the separation of our organism is even more apparent. To play this piece on the piano requires a right hand in one melody, and with a three-beat rhythm, a left hand in another melody with a two-beat rhythm; one foot stays on the loud pedal for periods in no way related to either rhythm, or to the left foot, which presses the soft pedal with discretion. As if this were not enough, one melody must

sometimes come to the front and then the other; your fourth finger cannot bring out as much tone as your third, and must be forced to, and your little finger must diverge from your thumb enough to reach to or surpass an octave. You might feel after such an exercise of your powers, "Now I am really a man! I can have hand, arm, finger, foot, melody, rhythm-consciousness all at once." Each of these organs or ideas might plume itself on living unto itself, and the thumb for instance rejoice that it was as consciously a factor in the process as the melody, or the emotion, which the whole piece expressed. The fact of the matter is, of course, that this period of the separateness of all the component parts of the playing process is very fatiguing and unsatisfactory, and until a person has got beyond it, and has felt the emotion but forgotten his thumb, he can hardly be said to play the piano. Or, if we could impersonate this little member, we might say to it, "It is all very well for you to think of yourself, and say you are as important a part of the piece as anything else. So you are; but until you forget it, and let the player forget it, there is not any piece at all!"

Even the performer may be a little bewildered at the discovery that when he was the most conscious of himself in all his members he was a failure, and no person at all, and only when he forgot that he was any one and lost himself in his interest, did he find that he was an artist, — but such is the case. The real personality in any situation is the man who forgets that he is one, as much as is consistent with other men doing the same. And our respect for his character dwindles if we realize more and more that a studied self-consciousness directs all his activities.

We must admit, then, that even within the individual character, the different activities, while they are *acquired* as separate affairs become useful only as they lose that separate identity, and allow themselves to be forgotten. And, moreover, the combination of them all which makes up what we call our separate personality, only comes to its fullest realization when it can lose itself in an interest, or if it does not possess such a capacity in every direction, it is only really strong and powerful in the lines where it can so do. If I have not got beyond the separate foot and finger stage at the piano, yet can swim with no thought beside

the idea of the boat I am heading for, then I am a swimmer, but I am no player. If when I say a prayer I am conscious of a great many disconnected ideas, that I am in an uncomfortable position, and that I wonder why I am doing it, whereas it is enough simply to hear dance-music at a party, to go through the necessary movements, then I am a dancer, but I cannot pray. Where I am so conscious of the details of technique that each one stands by itself, I am not as yet a success; but where I have mastered the technique enough to forget it, I am a master.

All that we have said about the relation of a person to his work or to his art must be said with equal emphasis about persons in their relations to one another. If we all of us continue to feel that we are separate affairs (for we must begin this way, just as each muscle must acquire its own local sign), and if we do not lose our own separate entity in the life of the whole, we are not artists at living. This separateness of aim makes trouble in the world, because society at large is made, just as each bodily organism is made, that the whole should work together, and that only in so doing should it live a complete life. Continual

thought on one detail of the whole social person makes a hitch in proceedings, just as the thought, "How are my lips moving as I talk?" will dampen the spirits of any conversationalist, no matter how well his lips may function if let alone. Moreover, this life of common personality is not forced upon us. We like it. The hardest thing for most people to bear is complete isolation. They would rather be over-worked, be too important to their family and neighborhood, than feel that their opinion is of no consequence to any one, and that they can neither help nor hinder, nor be so influenced themselves, by any one in the world.

If the matter had been laid before us, at the creation of the world, how should we have answered the following questions? Shall we allow one man to influence another man by speech, by action, by physical heredity? Shall we allow one to influence another for evil as well as for good? Shall we make the consequences of sin always fall in exact measure on the head of the criminal and on no one else? Shall we always visit the consequences of sin on the man himself, within a given time, so that all the world may learn from his ex-

ample? How soon shall retribution take place? What visitation would you suggest that shall affect no one but the criminal? Shall ignorance be punished as summarily as sin? If not, how shall it be treated? Shall ignorance prosper as well as wisdom? How far-reaching shall the effects of both sin and ignorance be? If they do not stop with the man himself, shall they affect his family, his country, his age, or shall their limits be undefined? Shall human beings always remain on the earth, or shall they die? If they do not die, shall they remain young, or middle-aged, or old? What activities will engross them on earth for an eternity? If, on the other hand, they die, shall it be always at a given age, or can other men influence this date, and hasten or retard it? Will it be kinder, if they do not want to live forever on such an earth as has been given them, to soften their regret at leaving it? Would it not be better to make men want to die, and make their friends face their departure with composure? Would it not make life easier if the after life were no mystery, but any man knew his future as well as his past? Why keep men in a world they do not enjoy, by a fear of the next world, whose essence

they do not know? Such are a few of the questions that might have been put to us, and which in fact are now put to us, and which we must consider for a little. If we find that our solutions of the difficulty are no way different from those already existent in the world, we must decide that we have already what we want. If we, on the other hand, will have something altered, we must specify how it is to be changed.

In any given evil situation we can feel the tragedy and the sorrow of it; but should we want it changed in principle? Should we want human beings unable to choose the wrong because of any other force than their own good habits? Should we prefer total impassivity to our real grief? And do we really want not to die? Perhaps nothing would bring the matter more vividly before us than to imagine conditions the reverse of those already obtaining in the world.

Let us then protest at once. The guilty alone shall suffer for their evil deeds, and the innocent shall start with a clean page. Each man shall have a just punishment in the nature of things, and not suffer as much for an impulsive moment as another man does for

long contemplated crime. Ignorance shall not meet the same fate as sin, and man shall not die. If he does, it shall simply be at the natural end of his life and without loss of powers, only with a loss of the will to live. All this is a legitimate wish if we really want it; but if we choose such a course of things we must face all its consequences.

This demand springs at bottom from the desire that men should be separate individuals, and not be of a common family. It arises from the protest against one person's having a better chance than another; against a child's being burdened with the frailties of his father or of his society; against a man at one corner of the earth suffering because of the deficiencies of another man at an opposite corner. "Why should I be deprived of the use of my arm, because a drunken conductor ran my car off the track? Why should I be an invalid because of my great-grandfather's mistakes? Why should a burglar have the power to shoot my son?" It is natural enough to say in our heat that the conductor, the great-grandfather, and the burglar should have the capacity to kill themselves but not us, that in the nature of things it ought to be impossible for their lives to hurt

ours. But implying, as this does, an isolation of individual influence to one's own person alone, do we really mean what we say? Suppose that what we say we want, is actually the case. The constitution of things has been altered to suit us, and all is the reverse of what it was. At first we feel a great freedom from responsibility. It is glorious to know that I have no obligations to any one, nor any one to me, and there is a certainty about results which was never possible in the old way. I know in every decision that my goodness will be appreciated by a waiting world at its exact worth, and since my punishment is my own business, I need refrain from nothing because of its possible effect on my friends, my children, my contemporaries, or posterity. They will start free, exactly as if I had not existed at all. I am an isolated unit, wholly sufficient or deficient unto myself, with a clean slate, on which no one can make a mark but myself.

As it is in the world at present, while we feel that virtue gets its reward in the individual conscience by its sense of duty done, we know that it is not always adequately recognized and applauded by the public. There is some hesitation, when embarking in a new enterprise,

as to whether it will be understood, whether our motives will be considered pure, and, in fact, whether it will turn out to be the best thing after all. But in this new scheme there will be not the slightest difficulty in dividing the sheep from the goats. If a man is unhappy, we need not sympathize with him, for he is getting what he expected, and what he chose with his eyes open. And the virtuous are not to be commended, for they are getting the best of the bargain, and are being amply rewarded for any inconvenience it may have cost them. Indeed, he is only a fool who chooses to sin, when prosperity and good health attend him on his virtuous path.

This conception of the nature of things is not a new one in history. The old Jewish notion was rather frankly based on the profit and loss aspect of the godly life. The righteous man spread himself like a green bay tree, and the wicked man was caught in his own net. Moreover, from any point of view, the righteous life has been found to pay in the long run, from the peace it brings the soul, and the respect from the most high-minded portion of society. But it has not always paid, in the sense that it has brought health, an easy life,

or the appreciation of the majority. On the contrary, it has more often than otherwise led to a serious sacrifice of pleasure, ambition, and even of life. This is the risk that the righteous man has had to run. It has been something of a leap in the dark, where the reward has become a less and less prominent part of the consideration, as the nature was noble and the situation a serious one. These two changes in the nature of things — certain reward and punishment for the innocent and guilty respectively, and the impossibility of evil (and therefore of good) influence — would assuredly alter our attitude to many situations, and with its greater justice bring a lack of savor to certain virtues.

For instance, there has been a satisfaction in the family hitherto, as the parents saw their children respond to the good things they had struggled to provide for them, even though they sighed to see their own shortcomings reproduced in their offspring. But now the father may be as dissipated, and the mother as deceitful as she chooses. They know they have no influence on their children, and, in fact, are brought up standing with the fact that they are not *their* children at all! They

are simply children as such, with no dependence on any one for good or evil, and the parents, with their freedom from responsibility, have lost their parenthood.

In business, the same freedom brings the same isolation. Let the railroad employees, the bridge-builders, the meat-packers, the teachers, the doctors, the chauffeurs, and the nursemaids be as careless as they choose. The engineers and the chauffeurs will kill themselves, and such of their load of passengers as deserve it. The nursemaid may abandon her charges, and the doctor prescribe quack doses; for surely it is not just, that an innocent baby should suffer lasting injury from a careless maid, and why should a doctor have the capacity to poison our systems? Whatever we may say nowadays about the separation of classes, we are in reality most manifoldly bound up with one another. We commit ourselves a hundred times a day with trusting confidence to our unknown brethren, from the milkman to the subway architects, though we know that they can kill us, and sometimes they do. A king is not safe from his valet or his cook, and the cook or the valet is not safe from the king, except as each respects the bond that

unites them. Occasionally they do not respect it, and as the distance becomes wider and wider between a man and his possible victim, the bond has less and less strength, until most of us can endure with comparative ease the murder of our brethren if they are sufficiently removed from sight. In the new state of affairs, however, the milkman poisons only himself, and since this means that his action must bring pain to no innocent person, his family and society must have ceased to care anything about him. In fact, it is absolutely essential that all affection shall be restricted to the perfect man in this new régime, since sympathy with the unjust man in his certain destruction will only bring an uncalled-for pain upon ourselves. If my friend sins then, I am at once indifferent to him, for he must arouse no pangs in my innocent breast.

This whole supposition demands a satiric treatment, which only a master of prose could give it. If we have sighed hitherto for the Miltonic imagination to picture divine emotions, we need now the irony of Swift to picture our world as it would be if this ideal isolated justice obtained in it. The meaning of patriotism would be curiously changed if every good

soldier knew that no enemy's bullet could touch him, while the unworthy man, who must expect death, would assuredly keep away. Love and sympathy would be a different matter if they were immediately outgrown when their object was found unworthy, and a mother would face the death of her sinful child without interest or emotion. This must, of course, happen if a good woman is not to suffer for another's sin. The eye must watch the hand in flames without winking, and the mouth bear witness against the body with equanimity, for why should an eye suffer for a hand? "As it is written, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

Swift has indeed come to our aid in his terrible portrayal of endless human life upon earth. Certainly no death and no future torment could exceed the horror of that imagined survival of the earthly life, and we can hardly say either that he has exaggerated the facts. Those who have read his voyage to Laputa, which succeeds the famous sojourn with the Brobdingnags, will remember the unfortunate immortals, who show at birth, by the spot upon their temples, that death can never be their portion. Mr. Gulliver, upon hearing of

these deathless ones, is carried away with enthusiasm over their lot, an enthusiasm which he observes is not shared by their countrymen. On closer acquaintance with them, he finds that their future is not one for congratulation. In order that the next generation shall have an equal chance, and one set of undying persons be not allowed to monopolize the fruits of the earth, they are regarded as dead by the law after a certain age; indeed, their own exhaustion of the resources of earth interest makes them clamor for death as other men have clamored for life.

This kind of a nightmare, of course, does no one any good except to give one pause, as it did Mr. Gulliver, who remarked, "From what I had heard and seen, my keen appetite for perpetuity of life was much abated. I grew heartily ashamed of the pleasing visions I had formed; and thought no tyrant could invent a death into which I would not run with pleasure from such a life."

One of Swift's critics made this comment, which we must admit is perfectly true: "The sight of such an 'immortal' would no otherwise arm men against the fear of death, who have no hope beyond it, than a man is armed

against the fear of breaking his limbs, who jumps out of a window when his house is on fire." In other words, a choice that lies simply between the devil and the deep sea will not rouse hope in either direction, but a fear in both. So a man who has no hope in death must admit that he has none in life either, and the case is at least equal. We can turn drearily from one alternative to another, and say that at least one situation is no worse than the other, even though neither brings comfort with it.

This kind of an issue is, however, not what we are looking for. We must accept the constitution of this world as good, unless we can suggest another better, but not quarrel with it if our modifications only bring about another condition just as bad.

It may be, then, that we are willing to admit all the foregoing supposition as reduction to an absurdity, but still protest that the difficulty lies in the existence of evil at all. *If* men can sin, their children, their friends, and their countrymen must suffer more or less with them. We admit that the ties of family and of affection are too vital to be thrown over, simply to obtain the immunity from suffering

possible only in such unsocial isolation as we have described. We will then grant that the burden of our ability to make the innocent suffer is a restraint, a bond of family tie, as is the responsibility that comes with it of passing on good gifts, as undeserved as the evil ones. I have to suffer for financial panics that are not my fault, and I enjoy national prosperity which is also none of my doing. The wisdom of this general principle perhaps some of us will allow, but we nevertheless contend, "Why have financial panics? Why are men allowed to be criminally negligent so that their cigars set forest fires, and their flimsy architecture allows theatres to collapse?" In other words, is this freedom to do evil any real freedom at all? Is it not a bondage into which we are born, rather than liberty, and should we not all be freer men, if we could not do evil if we would?

There is some truth in this, it must be admitted at once. We are really more free with some voluntary restraint, or as Kant said, "The good will is the only one that is free." Here are two men of middle age, one of them a slave to the habit of drink, and the other with years of upright living behind him. In

one sense, is he not a slave as well as the other? Is not one as much in bondage to his good habits as the other to his bad, so that it would be as impossible for him to spend his days in the saloon as it is for the other man to keep out of it? Most of us are more or less slaves to the non-killing habit, so that it would be difficult, not to say impossible, for us to shoot a man for his watch. Some men could perform this feat easily; are they not then more free than we? Most of us feel that this is leading us too far. Our incapacity to kill is only a fetter if we want to kill. Since in point of fact we do not want to, and do not *want* to want to, this background of an opposite habit is a support and not a drag to us. The reason that the drink habit is a bondage, is that the man is divided against himself. He wants to drink, but he does not want to want to, and hence the will that contradicts itself is not free. It is the opposition of itself to itself that makes a will a slave, not the opposition of outside factors to it, hence it is only the good will which never contradicts itself. In this sense Christ in chains was a freer personality than the hesitating Pilate.

Our duty is, then, to develop a greater and

greater bondage to good habits. If we tell lies easily at ten years of age, at twenty it should be more difficult, and at fifty impossible. Our life should be spent in losing our liberty to do evil, just as our sense of personality was acquired only to lose it as soon as possible, in the life of the whole.

If all this is true, are we not contradicting what we have been affirming ever since we started? We have spoken of the ability to sin as if it were a certain patent of superiority of freedom. We affirmed that our right to reject God if we choose was the human capacity that made us God-like, while here we say that any evil will in the course of time is bound to contradict itself, and is therefore not a free agent. Our whole system of education seems to be on the plan of depriving children of the freedom to do evil. We shield young children from even the knowledge of some sins, and certainly from all opportunity to commit them, thereby forcing as much allegiance to the good life as possible, so that they may not even have the risk of choice. We all acknowledge that this is wise; why should we not carry it further? The wonders of hypnotism we are only beginning to under-

stand. A man under its influence can be cured of many an evil habit. The physician says to him in hypnosis, "When the impulse to take morphine begins to attack you next time, you will not submit to it," and under the influence of this post-hypnotic suggestion, the patient is deprived of the will to take the drug and becomes in time a cured man.

Why should not this device be employed with all the rising generation, before it gets so deep in bad habits of all kinds? We use good influences, why not good hypnotic suggestion? We put children under helpful teachers who suggest things to them in a normal fashion, why not strain a point and have these suggestions so imperative in hypnosis that they cannot be resisted, and hence avoid much later suffering?

Here again we begin to feel that we are driven into a position we do not care to hold. We realize that all the time while we are giving suggestions and helpful environment, while we are keeping certain phases of life in the background and emphasizing others, we are regarding our children not wholly as persons, but as persons to be. They are not yet quite individual, but they are, in so far as our

will chooses for them, "things" which shall some day be men. After a certain amount of modeling in the hands of the potter, they are sent forth with a dower of memories, of useful habits and tendencies, and told to fend for themselves. These good habits do not make them slaves, for we see all too often how easily they are outgrown, but they merely help the will to an equal chance. There are so many attractions dragging a life in all directions, that for a will to hold a single course of goodness among various paths of contradiction, it must have some help to make the game an even one. Nevertheless, after we are mature, we feel that it is better for us to have our choice even at the risk of having our fingers scorched, than to live forever in safety under the guidance of some one else.

The situation, then, seems to be this. The freedom to do evil must be a real one, in that a man is prevented from doing it only by himself. The more he makes the evil impossible for himself by his own choice, by his deliberate habits, by the position in society where he chooses to put himself, the more — not the less — he becomes free, because his will is still attaining what it wants. Whatever

bondage to the good he puts himself under is not bondage, but freedom, yet he must have had the chance to choose the other slavery which really deserves its name. Just as the essence of the divine in us is our capacity to assert our God-head or deny it, so the essence of our will is that it can choose its free path, or can choose to deprive itself of all freedom by bondage to the evil. We can even choose to keep out of reach of certain temptations, and by so doing (other things being equal) we have overcome them, for there is no virtue in the mere expenditure of energy in struggle. But we now see that no matter how much we deplore the evil wills in the world, — the wills that frustrate themselves as well as us, and bring desolation with them, — nevertheless, we prefer to live in a world of men who have had their chance. It remains for us to lock them up and treat them as dangerous things, if they become insupportable, or more important still, to treat them as precious things a little longer and more thoroughly in their youth, so that they start their real life with a better equipment. That we do not so care for our weaker brethren shows that we are not so much concerned over the

evil in the world as we pretend to be in our quiet moments.

All that we have said in this chapter about the will proves of course nothing about its final essence. Whether we are in the last analysis anything more than moving machines cannot be proved, because there is no possible system of proof that will convince an impartial mind one way or the other. If we are only automatons, we must give up such a God as we have described, or indeed any God who can demand anything whatever of us. We must also give up our notion of real virtue or sin or blame. In short, our whole conception of personality goes with it, and so far as logical proof is concerned, this is all as possible as the reverse. But if we have chosen to walk the path along which our hope rather than our dread leads us, this mechanical point of view is forever impossible.

We have found that our Eden can never be complete without a tree of forbidden fruit in its midst. Happy are we if we choose not to eat of it. Society is the more content if we nibble only the more inconspicuous apples, though for our own souls it does not much matter which one we pick, if we taste at all.

Our spiritual health depends in its weakest stages on our not willing even the evil we may *want*, but we are hardly robust until what we will and what we want have come into harmony. The path of virtue leads at last to this harmony of will desire, even though on the way the will is sometimes divided against itself; whereas the evil will must eventually contradict itself, no matter how deceptively harmonious it is at first.

We shall not go into any ethical theories here. Our only effort has been to convince some of our counsel for the complaint, that if the evil world is all the charge they have against the Creator, they must withdraw their suit. They must admit that they really have in principle what they want, however badly the details work themselves out through their own misuse of freedom.

As we look over our questions with which we began the discussion we find ourselves saying, "We are all brothers, and bound up with one another. We prefer to be persons, though that allows us to deny our will, our God, and our brotherhood, if we choose. We must influence one another infinitely, though that implies that evil shall be passed on as well as

good, and that the innocent and the unworthy will get both more and less than they deserve." Ignorance must not prosper, and virtue must not seek its ideal because of certain reward. We do not care to live here forever. All friends cannot die at once, leaving no ruptured ties, and those who are left do not want to give up their grief for anything less than an infinite faith. A complete knowledge of where they or we are going would not help us, except as we have a right to believe we shall be safe with a good God. Sensation contact with them, although we miss it, is not what we really desire, any more than we wish such contact with God. We want to be actually with them, with no reservations, and we hope that we shall be, — therefore we believe. We have a dread of death, but we want this very dread. Without it, the temptation to die would be too hard to fight, and we should leave our work unfinished. We find ourselves, after all the efforts of our imagination, in just such a world as we have always lived in!

We began with this: —

> Oh Love, could you and I with Him conspire
> To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
> Would we not shatter it to bits — and then
> Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's desire?

But we find upon thinking out each opposite possibility to its conclusion, that we have our heart's desire already! It is the individual case which we deplore, and not the principle. We have chosen the law ourselves, but we are unstable enough to quarrel with its natural outcome. This clash of will is also human, therefore we love it! We would not be such fatalists as to sink into a nerveless apathy, or such pessimists as to have no choice but to curse God and die. Nor indeed would we be possessed of a philosophic calm, which could be moved by neither indignation nor pity.

We are human, therefore we struggle, but there is enough of the divine in all of us to look upon creation as a whole and say, "Behold, it is very good."

VI

PRAYER

We are now out of the woods of theory, in the open field of experimental facts. There is no need to begin on a philosophy of prayer, because by our definition of God we know that prayer is not only natural but necessary, and the relation of all others that the Creator would have established between Himself and His children. The question is now rather, "How *does* one pray?" If we had not already defined the kind of God we choose to believe in, we should have a right to ask such questions as these: "Is it reasonable to pray? Is there a God to hear, and is it possible for Him to answer?" but coming as far as we already have, these questions have answered themselves. We accept the possibility of prayer and of answer on exactly the same basis as that on which we have believed in our God. We believe in the efficacy of prayer because we must either believe in it or its opposite, and the hoped-for alternative is always our choice.

The question before us is therefore a different one. We want no theories nor assumptions, but experimental testimony as to how one actually prays; and although the question might seem easier to answer than some queries we have already advanced, this is by no means the case.

If we were asked what we meant by prayer, most of us would give an answer like the following: "It is the addressing of petitions to a Being whom we do not see, but whom we believe to exist." Most of us, at some time of our life at least, have prayed; that is, we have addressed petitions in thought or words to such a supposed Being; and yet many of us feel, at the same time, that in spite of this exercise we have never really prayed. We feel that it did not amount to anything, that no results came from it, and we have either outgrown the habit, or continue to indulge in public or private prayer only because it seems somehow the thing to do. Although most people feel a certain sentimental attachment to the practice of prayer, — children should be taught it, a devout old lady is more attractive than the reverse, — there is certainly a wide discontinuance of its exercise in any serious

and regular way, and I believe this is largely due, with would-be religious people, to the fact that they actually do not know its technique. It can be said in a certain sense that all the world prays, but in another that prayer is an art attained by very few.

We all of us know what we mean when we say pole-vaulting, or singing operatic music, or driving a four-in-hand, but how many of us can do these things, and do them well? Some of us try spasmodically to do all of them, but we seldom get so that their performance is easy or satisfactory, and as we grow older, we give up the struggle. While we admire the feats performed by those who have been more persistent, we confess that such attainments are not for us. Now these exercises need training, they are the result of delicate adjustment and of long patience, and there are few artists in these or any other callings. Prayer is an exercise, on the religious side, an intercourse with one's God, but on the mental side an exercise which is sometimes difficult and often fatiguing, and can no more be learned to perfection in a few trials than can the arts of lesser significance. It is all very well to say, and it is in a sense true, that any man can pray if he

only will. His desire is the main thing, and the performance is of less account. But every man who begins to pray after long disuse of the practice, knows very well that he cannot pray as he wishes to. He either has never had the art, or he has lost it, and while he derives some comfort from the little he is able to regain, he will not know how to pray until he has learned the art over again.

There has been much scientific interest of late years on all sides in the matters of religion, prayer, conversion, and revival. Psychologists and philosophers have devoted themselves to the investigation of these phenomena as they had formerly done to other normal or abnormal activities of the mind. They have tried to collect data from many sources on how men pray, their emotions after prayer, their reasons for praying, and many other related questions; and the resulting mass of material, though often undigested, has revealed the fact that many men were actually praying and deriving satisfaction from so doing. The main difficulty with this kind of investigation is that the compiler of the statistics takes so often a detached point of view, and is so apt to be a non-praying man, that

what is usually the richest source of any such observation — namely, the observer himself — is conspicuously lacking. It is not usual, I think, for a deaf man to undertake experiments on sound, although with care this might be managed. The work of any psychologist on the emotions is apt to be weak, if he does not have an inkling of what it is all about from his own emotional life. Of course he has a right to compile statistics from what his subjects tell him, but he cannot look at the matter with the sympathetic understanding of one who has also had an emotion. His discrimination cannot be keen, and his suggestions are not valuable. Few investigators choose to work in æsthetics, if they have no feeling for the beautiful. Some doubtless do so, and record what others tell them of their delight in music, or of the difference in their appreciation of prose and poetry. But no one is apt to be a success in this field who cannot use himself as his own best subject. The whole matter does not branch in his mind, criticisms do not suggest themselves, and while the records of other people's comments may be faithful and exact, his own contributions must necessarily be of a slight order. The situation

in the religious field seems to stand in this predicament. The men who pray do not tell how they do it, as a general thing; and also, as a general thing, the psychologists who tell us how it is done, do not do it themselves. Each side is a trifle suspicious of the other. The psychologist interested to observe but not to practice, and the praying man determined to practice and equally determined not to be material for any psychologist, are not likely to draw each other's confidence. The general public takes it for granted that an interest in the human mind is likely to diminish respect for its higher functions, and while advanced work in literature is compatible with piety, and one may be a Greek archæologist with impunity, a religious psychologist is not expected; and if he prays, it draws a sidelong glance. I give this as the current opinion with which I am familiar, although it may not hold in all localities. I simply say that I am accustomed to see students approach their Latin, their art, and their history with a cheerful carelessness, while they darkly brood over approaching psychology, and their parents are apt to shake their heads until that crisis is passed. There is usually some basis

for public opinion, and it may be that the habit of observing one's own mind at work hinders the working, just as we have observed that thinking about one's separate movements in crossing a room does not tend to make one more graceful. But if we already have a habit of prayer firmly established, this period of self-consciousness will not affect it any more than the question whether the outside world really exists makes us cut our friends. The social method in which a philosophic seminar manages the question of the reality of the world outside one's own consciousness has nothing of this paralyzing effect. As we have already observed, the students embark briskly on the problem together; they read papers to the listening ears of the world whose existence they are disproving, and they contradict the statements of their opponents with as much heat as if they were not phantoms of the imagination. You see them dispersing from the class by twos and threes, assuring their friends that they are not there, and enjoying the society of one another's nonentities. It is just because the discussion has not affected their normal life in any way but to make it more thoughtful, that all is as it should be.

But if, on the other hand, this skeptical question cast a cloud upon the class, if from their very doubt they gave up arguing as a useless exercise, and took to discoursing with themselves or to silence, the situation would be a critical one. Moreover, if they did not have a habit of social intercourse well fixed upon them, if they had become tired of speech and were looking for an excuse for eternal silence, here would be their chance. They would shake off the habit of social conversation as easily as they now dispense with their daily prayers.

If prayer is considered from its formal side, as the recitation of certain devotional words which other men have written, the difficulty at once presents itself, of making one's own desires, one's own mood, fit in with another's phraseology. If, on the other hand, a man is left to himself to pray, he often does not know what to pray about. He actually does not know what to say. After asking for one or two things, his mind refuses to work, and he betakes himself regretfully to something else, feeling quite certain that his praying was not done well, but not knowing how to remedy matters. Any such discussion of the mechanics, the technique of prayer may seem irreverent

to some, but I believe that to be a false reverence which keeps any one from facing the facts. The situation is just this, — that in places of public worship, where a large number of people are gathered together presumably engaged in prayer, a very large fraction of them in reality are not praying at all. Perhaps the minister is, and perhaps not. A certain class, we will assume, feel an actual communion with the Person whom they are addressing. Certain others want to do so, but cannot keep their minds on the matter. Their ideas go trailing off on affairs of ordinary routine, only to be dragged back occasionally by a violent jerk; and even when they are thinking about what is being said, they are still very possibly not praying. With the class which makes no pretense of paying any attention to what is intended to be prayer, we are not interested — although it is a large one. We belong to the class of those who would pray, but who do not know how, and our real state of mind, which we divulge to no one, hardly even to ourselves, is sometimes like this. The leader of the meeting has asked the participants to engage in silent prayer. We are in usual health, with ordinary prospects. Our friends

are well, we have no anxiety on our minds, and we do not know what to pray for. We have no idea what to think about. The prayer-book comes to mind at such a time, and we endeavor to repeat a prayer, and when it is said, we do not know what to do next. Shall we repeat the same thing over and over — that is, is there a virtue in mere recital? In short, is there anything in prayer that differs essentially from thought, and when we have thought a prayer, have we prayed? Certainly the testimony of every one would be against any such hypothesis. The recital has been most unsatisfactory; it has left us where we started, and we know that we have not yet struck the root of the matter. If we state our difficulty to some one more gifted in the exercise, he replies that we must think as if speaking to some one. The essence of the matter, he says, is that what we have thought has been listened to, and if we have a vivid realization of the presence of the listener, the exercise will not be such a barren, one-sided affair. To this suggestion we reply, that in ordinary conversation the interlocutor makes audible answers, so that a man knows that he is being listened to. If this response ends,

and he has no indication that his remarks are being heard, he stops talking, whereas one must pray on, without any response whatever. We are then advised to pause in the act of praying, to give a chance for response to be heard. But again our restive mind takes advantage of the pause, and races off on its own concerns without waiting for reply. We are made sadly conscious that we do not know how, and that though we are willing to give the matter an experimental trial, we have not the technique which makes the exercise a satisfactory one.

There have been giants in all the varied activities of the human mind, and there have been among them giants of prayer. We know that St. Paul and Martin Luther, St. Francis and Thomas à Kempis, were able to pray, not in the one and two minute periods which we can compass, but for hours together, and Jesus Christ, that master of the art, prayed for days and nights, an achievement before which we stand speechless.

I venture to say that even though we were convinced that the suffering of the world would actually cease, if we prayed to that end for twenty-four hours, not one of us would be

capable of such a feat! True, the Bible, our text-book of prayer, informs us that we shall not be heard for our much speaking; nevertheless, the saints of history have spoken much. They spoke not for the sake of the speaking, but because they had an abundance to say, and because they had an abundance to say, their prayer was really prayer, and their names are placed among those of the world's great men.

All the relations between the human and the divine mind, or between the human and divine aspects of the mind of man alone, have to be considered from the view-points both of their *significance* and of their *psychology*. It is nothing against a motive of self-sacrificing patriotism to say that it is a psychological fact. Its value for life does not lie in this aspect of it, but its value for psychology, though this is of lesser worth in the general scheme of things, is as real, and has as much right to be considered. In the same way, prayer in its perfect exercise, though from one standpoint a high communion, is from another a mental fact like any other, and some of the criteria of other mental facts can be applied to it. Prayer, for instance, as an attentive state is

subject to all the laws of attention; as an emotional state, it expresses itself as do other emotions; and as thought in general, it depends upon memory, mental imagery, and the association of ideas. One must not attempt to do in prayer what one could never do in any other line of mental activity. One must not brave Providence by flying in the face of mental law, any more than one must leap from a cliff and expect angels to catch him. A law is a law, whether of mind or of matter, and there are, I believe, certain ways in which a man cannot pray, however good his will, just as there are ways in which he cannot set a broken leg, no matter how much his sympathy goes out to the sufferer.

It is, nevertheless, one thing to make the foregoing statement and another to instruct in the art, and this indicates exactly where lies the weakness of all such discussion. Other matters are decided experimentally. The problem is taken to the laboratory and worked over by an investigator and many observers. They expect to arrive at results, and they do sooner or later, so that any one else who wants the facts of such phenomena has but to look up their data, and he has the whole story.

Not only in matters of psychology, but even more strikingly in the other sciences, a problem means experiment, experiment means results, and results mean invention. I can remember distinctly my first visit to New York from my country home, and how I was taken to the window to see a wagon go past without steam, rails, or horses. This my first motor-car would hardly be a novelty now to a savage in the jungle. Certainly motors today go past the house where I once lived, with all too great frequency, and yet it was not so very long ago that I made my first visit to New York. Flying-machines will be upon us shortly, and one has but to suggest a possible device for which the human race might have a whim, to be tolerably certain that it will be produced without much waste of time. This rapidity of progress is alarming to those of quiet tastes, but to most young people the prospect is full of charm. Where shall we be in twenty years? What new wonder will have become a commonplace? We long to be in the onward march, and to utilize forces which to our forefathers were yet undreamed of. There is progress in general education, too, as well as in invention. We all start nowadays with

certain theories as a background, which to a previous generation meant the climax, or the destruction, of all their previous knowledge. The standard of ordinary intelligence is steadily rising, and many can now understand subjects which were formerly the privilege of the few. But how does it stand in religious matters? Are we on a higher plane in religious practice than we have ever been before, or do we pray as poorly as mankind has always prayed, perhaps worse?

Even if a man were not at all interested in prayer through belief in its value, but observed it solely from the view-point of a phenomenon, how could he fail to notice that this human function is apparently at a standstill? Day after day, Sunday after Sunday, the same kind of thing being said, the same average amount of time spent in doing it, and the same wayward attention and uneasy sense of unsatisfactoriness when it is over, in a large proportion of the congregation, — if indeed there has been any attention at all. I cannot think of any more striking spectacle than an assembly of people in the conventional attitude of prayer, but manifestly not praying. Many of them are conscientious about trying,

but they have not the art, and the proportion of those who are succeeding is probably about the same as it was in Puritan days, in the Middle Ages, in the beginning of the Christian era, and in the days of Israel's wanderings! We know more about science than they, we even know more about religion, but I doubt if any one now living could give Moses or Elijah any suggestions about prayer.

I am insisting on this point simply for this reason. The current discussions of prayer approach it from a theoretical or from a statistical standpoint, and not from an experimental one. We ask whether prayer can conceivably change matters, whether there is actually anything in it of value, and the question is apt to be left as one of theory rather than of experiment. Is a different method of paper-making, of shipbuilding, of ventilation, of subterranean locomotion, of telegraphy, of healing the sick possible? "Try it and see" is the answer we get to such questions, and we do try, if we are interested in the matter, until we have proved that our hope can be realized, and our imagined possibilities can be substantiated. "Can prayer accomplish anything? Is it an art that can be raised to a higher

standard of excellence than the feeble exercise of it to which we are accustomed? Can we become real 'pray-ers' in any sense like the great pray-ers of history who have wrought great changes in the world, and who themselves attributed their power to this habit? Can we progress in this art, so that the old-time formulas will not be sufficient, and we must develop a new spiritual language, as we have a new scientific vocabulary?" All this is a matter for experiment. "Try it and see" is the only valid answer, and the only reason why we do not try it and see is because we do not want to! Here is an exact test for every man. "Do you know how to pray?" "Not very well." "Why not?" "Because I never have learned how." Again, "Why not?" "Because I do not care enough about it to try very hard." This is a frank answer, and states the difficulty accurately.

We all play the piano somewhat when we are young, and in the press of other matters we drop our practice, and leave concerts to professionals. We leave off singing, we drop our sketching, we lay aside this and that activity in which, in our more exuberant days, we felt convinced we should be proficient,

because we have not the patience to work hard at them and have lost our ambition to excel. This is really the essence of growing old,—the weariness that settles upon us in face of a variety of activities, and the frequency with which we admit that certain subjects are not in our line. In childhood all the world is in our line, and praying is accepted with the same cheerful attention as our meals. We all plan great things, and in twenty years how few of us are remarkable in the lines we have chosen, any more than in those we have dropped! As some one has remarked, "We all begin as originals, and most of us end as imitations."

If we are at all interested to bring about a different state of affairs, what is the best way to begin? We are all of us better educated than our forefathers, but are we any more efficient? We have greater social opportunities, more travel, more work, more variety, but are we more forceful personalities? Does the human race grow more impressive as it becomes more complex in its organization? No, our impressiveness and our force do not seem to keep pace with our culture. There is an ingrowing tendency to learning, and a rest-

less side of activity which prevents most of us from being human specimens who in any sense deserve the title *grand*.

Why may it not be possible that this very lack in human personality, this failure to fulfill its early promise, is due to the universal disuse, or insufficient use, of the exercise of prayer? I say this as a scientific suggestion, which might be made by any one, whether he was a praying man or not. The situation is this. Praying men — men who not only repeated prayers, but who by the judgment of their contemporaries really prayed — have always been marked personalities. Should we not expect them to be, if prayer means a real companionship with such a God as we have described? It is quite possible that many of us cannot number such a person among our acquaintances, but if we can, there is a certain efficiency of character, entirely aside from talent, which is noticeably present, whether causally connected or not. I have known several people who were raised from commonplaceness by apparently no other characteristic than this. They were not gifted, they were not subtle, they were not noted for their mental capacity, but there emanated from

them a certain force, which is conspicuously lacking in many more intellectual men. Indeed, intellectual men are by no means necessarily forceful. Any one who has been thrown with large numbers of students, whether their goal was a bachelor's or a doctor's degree, any one who is acquainted with a wide range of teachers even in higher institutions of learning, knows that they are not all influential men. In fact, the current social opinion is that they are apt to be the reverse. Students in general, I believe, look upon their instructors with some pity, and all too often have I heard such comments as, "He is an awfully interesting man in spite of being so learned," or "Such an instructor is really very nice outside of lectures, you would never know that he knew a thing!" No, the highly educated class is not as impressive as it sometimes fondly supposes. Now I venture to suggest that with all the chemists and engineers, the preachers and the doctors that are graduated every year, there are being turned out very few "pray-ers," if we can use the term in such a professional sense. I mean by that, I doubt whether any educated man, if indeed he prays at all, would be willing to do anything else

so feebly; and if he could pray as well as he could bind up a wound, or construct a bridge, I believe he would be a more forceful character than he is at present. This force is difficult to analyze. It surely would imply nothing in the way of a public exhibition of his talent. But I am certain that we all see well enough what I mean, so that if two men of equal professional ability were together, one being noted for his strong religious nature, and the other not, we should take a second look at the former, and expect him to conduct himself in some marked fashion. This is not a fashionable point of view at present. The tendency to-day is to cut off all useless exercises, and praying is regarded as one of them. Whether it is or not can only be tested, in my opinion, by practice; and since non-praying, weak, and intermittent praying, formal praying, and shamefaced praying have been given a good chance through a reasonable number of centuries, it is not impartial or scientific to give up the other alternative without a try. Moreover, it ought to be tried not only by the unthinking mass of people who pray from habit and training, but by the same class of scientists who decide other matters for us.

To some, no doubt, this would mean a dismal future. They do not want to pray, they do not enjoy even contemplating the possibility, and the society of praying men would honestly bore them. Such individual prepossessions are bound to be present in every experimental investigation, and every human being has as much right to choose his own religious, as his scientific habits. These non-praying men would come into such a test only as the background against which the contrary minded could be even more clearly defined. That is, every one would have to serve as either a positive or a negative illustration of the effects of prayer on personal living.

The situation is one of absolute lucidity. Either there is something in prayer, or there is not. If there is anything at all to be gained from it, it will in all likelihood be valuable exactly in proportion as the praying is vigorous, well sustained, and "effectual." There are probably limits to the good effects of its duration at any one time, just as muscular exercise may be in too long or too short periods to do any good. But as in general a man is a better walker if he can go four hours instead of one, so a man will be a better pray-er if,

when he wants anything, he knows how to pray until he gets it. The limits of this exercise could be approximately determined by practice. The difficulty that few men want anything enough to be able to pray for it any length of time would perhaps be overcome by exercise; that is, a greater desire for the spiritual life might come with the asking. "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," is not an uncommon state of mind, and prayer might relieve it.

The men who really pray, and who are willing to state their method in concrete terms, might tell whether they think in visual, auditory, or muscular terms; whether a certain amount of strained attention is a necessary adjunct, or whether prayer can be consistent with relaxation. Is it more effectual to conceive ourselves as addressing an actual Mind *within* our own, or one invisible but outside ourselves? Is it feasible to hold the mind in suspense and to wait for real response? How can this be done, since, psychologically speaking, it is impossible to think of nothing, and there must be some mental content even while one is waiting for possible answer? How much repetition is justifiable? Is a certain emotional

state to be brought about only by repetition of prayer phrases? Is this emotion valuable for itself, or entirely beside the point? How should we characterize the states of mind and body when we *can* pray, and those when we *cannot?* That is, sometimes we certainly feel more like praying than at others; are these times when we are rested or tired, busy or idle, when we have done well or done ill, when we have eaten or fasted? In short, there are endless questions which a prayer pedagogy might raise and possibly answer, but they will not be answered by looking up treatises on the philosophy of it, and writing the questions in a note-book, they will be answered only by the experimental prayer of every student. No man was ever yet a vigorous thinker on any subject who depended wholly on the authority of other people; he will not be here. If it turns out that prayer justifies its existence, then the art should be passed on with the accumulated wisdom of this scientific generation. Twenty years from now, a man should know whether he can or cannot pray better continuously or intermittently, better with certain personal habits or without them, better with active attention or in passive reverie,

better with repetitions or with the phraseology of usual speech.

All this is a matter of opinion already, just as the world knew something about mental life from simple emotional expressions and the instability of attention to the more complex subconscious processes and hypnotism, long before psychology as a science was ever heard of. We do not need to take courses in logic to know sound reasoning from fallacy, neither is it essential to study English merely to talk it, or hygiene in order to go in when it rains. Nevertheless, systematic experiment in science does tell us some things that common observation does not, and one generation is able to advance farther from its parent, when the heritage is an exact science, than when it comes merely in the form of tradition or current opinion.

To those who protest that such a systematic study of prayer is impossible, that you strike at the roots of devotion when you analyze it, I can only say that that too is a matter for observation, and not for a priori decision. Certainly if there is any analogy between prayer and the other arts, this criticism would not hold good. We have all felt the difference between

the appreciative attitude of an artist and that of the untrained but emotional public. In a picture gallery, the enthusiastic but ignorant give vent to such phrases as "heavenly," "unanalyzable charm," "exquisite temperament," "poetry of imagination," etc., all of which are good enough in their way, but which serve rather as outlets for feeling than as intelligible comments. The artists, on the other hand, speak in concrete terms of right and wrong colors, of accurate drawing, of composition, of treatment of light and shadows; evincing less inarticulateness of feeling and more specific observation than their non-technical friends. There is a certain college lecturer on Shakespeare who practices this principle in his classes. His attention is fastened always upon the meanings of words, the philological differences between our usage and that of the Elizabethan period, and his argument is, that if a student actually understands the text in all the shades of thought which language mirrors, the poetry speaks for itself. If a student wholly understanding Shakespeare's language does not enjoy it, he never will, no matter how much he is assured that it is enjoyable. Therefore when a fine passage stands explained be-

fore his audience, and the interested visitor is disappointed that nothing happens but, "There you have it, I will not insult your intelligence by comment," he sometimes asserts that the feeling behind that sentence is too cold. His students understand him better.

I have seen many concert audiences, and I am especially familiar with an American audience of girls whose pleasure in the music is often expressed by attitudes more or less dreamy or ecstatic. It has also been my privilege to frequent more sophisticated music-halls, where old concert tasters have taken their programme as one of the necessities of life. I have never forgotten one experience of a string-quartette concert, when my seat was in the midst of the other members of the orchestra, who, with me, were listening to their brethren's performance.

No mystic attitudes here, but the most alert interest in the treatment of rhythm, of tempo, of shading, and of technique, and enthusiastic appreciation when these matters were well managed. It might be contended that the uninstructed girl gets more out of her experience emotionally than they, but even that I will not grant. With an emotional temperament *and* intelligence one certainly gets more from any

art than with intelligence alone, but granted enough temperamental background to insure any interest at all, intelligence increases the interest rather than the reverse. Twenty years from now, the girls who knew something about music and wanted to know more will be the ones who support church choirs, local musicians, and strain a point to give their children lessons. The girls who repudiated intelligence as too cold a matter were in reality enjoying their own emotion rather than the music, and the test of time will show it. That the other alternative is true, that is, that intelligence alone is not enough for artistic appreciation, is obvious enough. As a certain museum official once remarked to me, "Women's clubs know everything about pictures nowadays; their dates, their first and second manners, and their development. They do everything, in fact, but look at them," and I have even heard of what seems to me the final absurdity, music lovers for whom the material sound is too crude, and who prefer to listen in total silence, while an open music score "pipes to the spirit ditties of no tone!" Such a refinement is beyond any to which poor old Beethoven ever attained, who was

never resigned to his deafness, but who in spite of a vivid auditory imagination longed for his own harmonies to come back to him by way of his auditory nerves.

That intelligence in religious matters is useless without feeling is obvious enough from its barren results, and further from its final impossibility. One can never know the reality of the religious life unless he has had it, any more than a man born blind knows anything of color. Moreover, one will never know anything from his own experience about religion unless he has certain hopes rather than others, and these hopes indicate a feeling.

We therefore must presuppose that any would-be religious man must have some feeling, some promptings to choose this way rather than the other, or the subject would not interest him to begin with. Is it *equally* essential that he should have intelligence? We must candidly admit that it is not. There is more real religion in an untutored but conscientious man than in an intellectual man, who does not hope for a God. But is the religious man more religious because he is unthinking, or simply in spite of it? Would it not be better for him, and for the world, if,

keeping his religion, he brought intelligence to bear upon it? It has been a more healthy state of society where parents have loved their children even though they unknowingly gave them the wrong food and air, than one (if any has ever existed) where their state of mind was indifferent and they coldly gave the children their due in hygienic doses. In the long run, the feeling instinct has kept more children alive, I believe, than the purely scientific attitude would have done, for in the latter case there would be no motive. But it would be absurd to say that any woman was a less feeling mother because she attended to the hygiene of her child with scientific accuracy. A good doctor is not less sympathetic because he can operate without fainting; why, then, should a praying man be less religious if he can tell the rest of us how to pray, not in vague terms, but in the most concrete fashion possible? It seems as if all vigorous practice led to greater naïveté. When men painted, they talked about grinding colors, and mixing them with water or eggs; those of us who cannot paint must needs grow sentimental or obscure.

Christ, that Master of Prayer, said de-

finitely: Do not pray on the street-corners to be seen and admired of men; Do not say the same thing over and over for the sake of speaking; Go thou into a room, and shut the door, and pray thus and so, — and He gave the great prayer formula which all of us know. He did not pretend to exhaust this subject, or, in fact, any other. That was not His way, for His time was short. His definite charge to His disciples was that they should do greater things than He had done, preach to more people, heal more sick, see more of the world, — and among other things, why not give more definite instructions than He had ever done on the technique of prayer? There must be a self-conscious period in acquiring the mechanism of any art. With a genius this is short, with most of us it is very long. Any one who does not have to attend to his technique, because he is an artist without it, is a happy man; but any one who refuses to attend to it, for fear his emotional life will not stand the shock, has an emotion sadly in need of props. If there is anything in prayer, we ought all of us learn it, and practice it, and teach it better than we have been taught. If there is not, we ought to stop it after a fair

trial, and leave it behind us as another outgrown superstition.

There is a final objection, which may naturally arise out of the very argument we have been advancing. Granted that praying may be a fine art with the spiritually gifted, we are plain people and cannot aspire to its perfect practice. The shoemaker must stick to his last, and those of us who must build and barter, sew and sweep, have enough to do to manage that, without attempting what would be beyond us. If praying is an art like writing poetry, like poetry we must let it alone!

To some extent this may be true. There are doubtless diversities of gifts, and some of us will inevitably fall into the Martha class. Nevertheless, we must not be compared with others, but with what we ourselves can develop from our own material, however poor. If we take singing lessons, we may not sing like Jenny Lind, but we shall sing better than we could without training. Moreover, however the arts and labors of daily life may become divided, so that one man does our cobbling, while we do his building, this division of labor has its limits. A man may do your tailoring, but he cannot do your eating; he may do your plumb-

ing, but your praying you must do primarily for yourself. We are parts of a social self, where in a perfect state every man would regard another equal to himself, and in which one man would no more rob his brother than his hand would snatch food from his own mouth. But we are also individuals, and some of our living, and all of our dying, must be done alone. You may affirm that the fine arts are not in your line, and while you live an impoverished life without them, you still live. You say morality is not in your line, and society, the rest of your larger self, shuts you up or wants to. You say religion and prayer are not in your line, and while you do not cut yourself off from men, if you still treat them fairly, you cut yourself off from something, and the only something that can bridge the gulf to the eternal solitude where lives your soul.

If you do not hope for the bridging of this gulf, you have not read this book. If a more than human companionship and hence a prayer communion is, however, the substance of your hope, you have as good a right to believe in its possibility as in the reverse, and believe you must, one way or the other.

If this higher possibility is worth anything at all, is it not worth more than our life would indicate, and is it too late for a new prophet to show us more clearly the way to its attainment?

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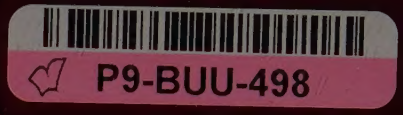
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